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Marriage and the Family

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Marriage and the Family

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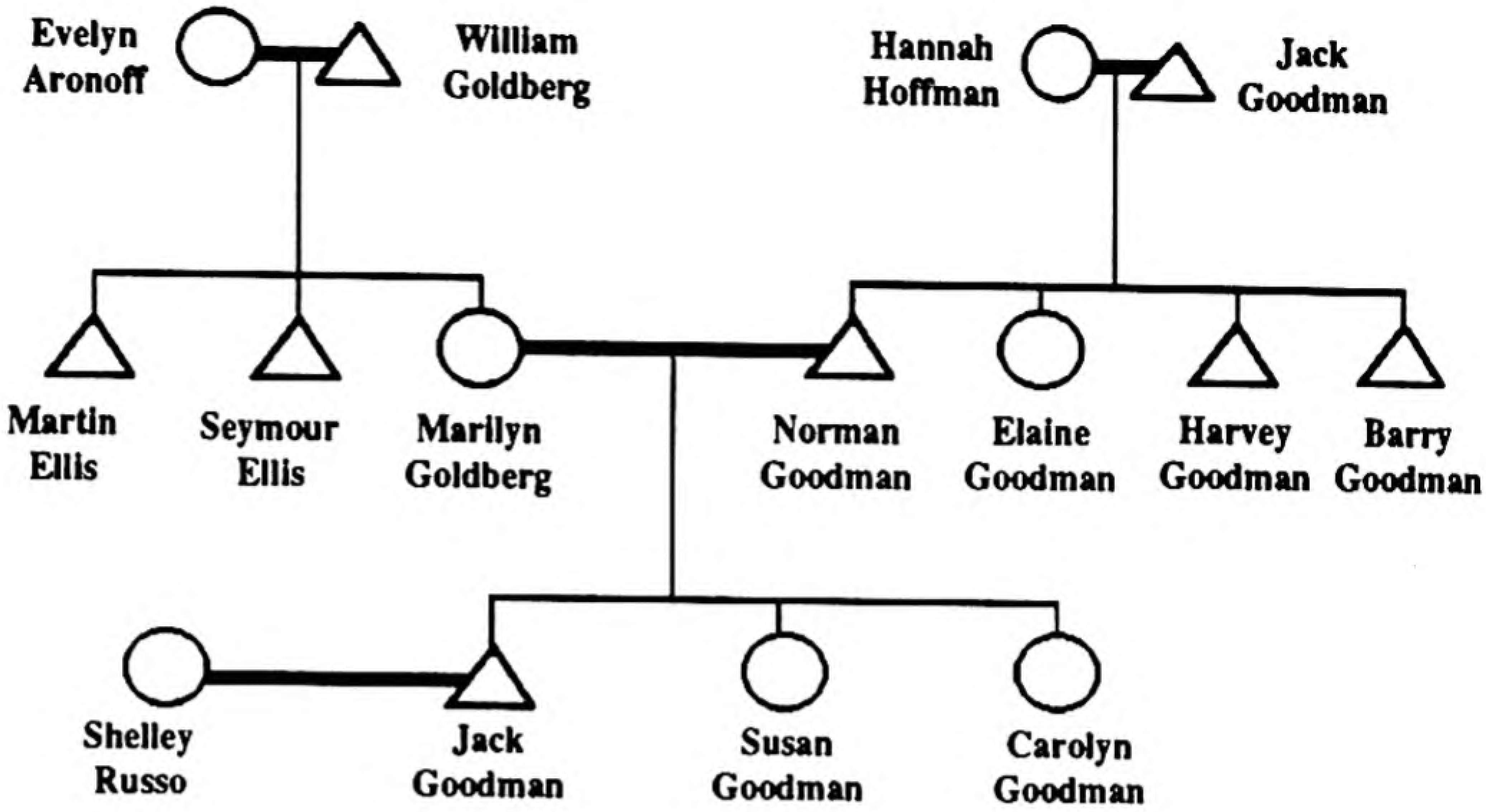
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Preface

This book is part of the HarperCollins College Outline Series and was written to provide the student and general reader with a review of the field of marriage and family life in clear, readable language and form. It can be used in a variety of different ways: (1) as a review of the many standard comprehensive textbooks in this field, (2) as a supplement to one of these textbooks, or (3) as a concise though integrated view of the field to be used in conjunction with an available anthology or an instructor-selected set of relevant readings.

Marriage and the family is more than a broad academic field of study; it touches the lives of every member of society. This book introduces the reader to the variety of ways that this field has been approached as an academic subject, and it summarizes the most relevant, up-to-date research. It also highlights some of the personal and social policy issues that are important to most if not all readers of this book. It uses examples from everyday life and research studies to tie abstract ideas and conceptual analyses to concrete experiences. The focus is always on making the information presented in this book easily accessible and understandable to the student and general reader.

No project of this magnitude is possible without the assistance, cooperation, and support of many people, and I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge those who contributed to its success. As with a previous book of mine, Judith A. V. Harlan kept this project on track with consummate professional skill and unfailingly good humor. The critical reviews by Robert Weinstein of drafts of each chapter were invaluable, as they were for a previous book of mine. I am also indebted to Susan McClosky and Catherine Podojil for their excellent editorial support, and to Carole A. Roland and Noreen Morin for their expert secretarial assistance, all of which helped bring this book to its completed form.

Finally, to my wife Marilyn and our children Jack, Shelley, Susan, and Carolyn, who taught me most of what I know about marriage and family life—sometimes without their being aware of it—and who pro-

vided much needed encouragement, love, and support during this project, I wish to acknowledge a debt that can never properly be paid by words alone.

Norman Goodman
Stony Brook, New York
July, 1992

1

Studying Marriage and the Family

This chapter provides basic definitions of the key concepts in the study of marriage and family life. It highlights the importance of study in this field and outlines the different perspectives used by researchers. A description of science as a mode of studying marriage and the family is used to carry the perspective beyond the realm of personal experience.

BASIC DEFINITIONS

One of the challenges of sociology is that some of its key concepts are used in everyday communication with less precision than within the discipline. Nowhere is this more true than in the field of marriage and the family. Therefore, it is important to be clear about how central concepts are used in this book while realizing that definitions are simply working tools. They highlight certain features of a concept for particular purposes at hand. They are generally neither right nor wrong, but merely more or less useful for a particular aim. It is in this sense that definitions are provided in this book.

Family

Definitions of the family frequently draw upon the work of the anthropologist George Peter Murdock (1949). Based on Murdock's analysis, Goodman (1992: 173) considers the *family* "a relatively permanent social group of individuals connected by ancestry, marriage or adoption." More recently, several American cities and states have defined looser arrangements (in some places called "domestic partnerships") as essentially equivalent to a family for purposes of qualifying for public housing and health insurance. The family takes several forms; these will be discussed in chapter 2.

Marriage

In essence, *marriage* is a set of laws and practices that serve to connect men and women in a relationship that establishes a family. These laws and customs define both the rights and obligations that marital partners have with respect to each other. As with the family, marriage may take different forms, and the issue of "domestic partnerships" serves to broaden the concept; these are also discussed in chapter 2.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

The Centrality of Marriage and the Family

All people are or have been members of one family or another. Most Americans will date, fall in love, engage in sexual intimacy, marry, and establish a family of their own. These experiences are central to the social life and sense of identity of most people. Family interactions make up a substantial part of people's daily routine and influence their feelings of joy or dissatisfaction with their lives.

Mainspring of Society

Contrary to popular belief, in most cultures it is the family—not the individual—that is viewed as the mainspring of society. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983: 11) make it clear that "[t]he couple is the basic unit of society. It is the unit of reproduction, the wellspring of the family, and most often the product of love, romance, and sexuality." Until recently, the family unit was so important that child and spouse abuse were often not treated seriously by authorities because the first was considered within the disciplinary prerogatives of the parent and the second was seen as a "domestic dispute" to be handled by the family members themselves. As another indication of the family's importance, family responsibilities have often been considered adequate justification for exemption from other duties. For example, a person is more likely to be allowed to take time off from work—or school—to attend the funeral of a close relative than that of a friend or acquaintance.

General Misconceptions About Marriage and the Family

Though everyone has a general familiarity through experience with marriage and family life, there are a number of misconceptions that have hindered a more objective understanding of this realm of human experience.

IDEALIZATION OF THE PAST

Folklore has assumed the prior existence of a tightly knit, harmonious family with little visible evidence of premarital sexuality. These views were evident in popular television programs of the recent past such as "Ozzie and Harriet" and "Leave It to Beaver." Most problems these families faced derived from external sources and were resolved through the strong emotional attachments of family members, their exercise of good judgment, and their goodwill—and often in less than an hour. Sexual issues were often conspicuous by their absence.

Family life portrayed in the mass media is mostly a work of fiction. Most presentations have tended to focus on white middle-class rural or suburban families playing stereotyped gender roles (see chapter 3). Even earlier in American history, families were more complex and less idyllic than this nostalgic picture suggests. For example, evidence from church records in New England in the eighteenth century, and national estimates for the seventeenth through the early twentieth century on the frequency of premarital pregnancies (Reiss and Lee, 1988: 76–77), reveal a moderately high level of premarital sexual intimacy among the youth of those times. Similarly, the famous studies by Alfred Kinsey and his associates (1948; 1953) document an unexpectedly high frequency and diversity of sexual behavior among American men and women of all ages.

CONFUSION OVER WHAT IS AND WHAT SHOULD BE

People enter marriage with their own ideas of what this state is like and how they wish it to be. Often these ideas differ from the reality of the experience. Any scientific study must be careful to distinguish between the facts of marriage and family life, and people's expectations of it. In research studies, respondents tend to report what they believe ought to be happening in their marriage rather than what in fact is taking place. Careful research must distinguish preference from fact. The Kinsey studies referred to earlier dispelled some of the myths about the sexual activities of Americans. To the surprise of most people, these studies documented the range and extent of sexual practices in the United States of the old as well as the young.

LIMITATIONS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Most people believe that their views and practices are the best—if not the only—legitimate ones. Nowhere is this more evident than in conceptions about the nature of man-woman relationships. Yet anthropological evidence makes clear that people acquire marital partners in ways other than by personal choice. In addition, forms of marriage and types of family structure differ throughout the world (see chapter 2). American marriage and family systems are neither universal nor necessarily the most preferred.

Even within American society, substantial variation exists that serves to limit people's ability to generalize from their personal experience. The nature of family structure and relationships may differ by gender, social class, race, religion, ethnicity, and even by geographical location—as will be evident in many of the chapters to follow. Even those who share similar social characteristics may differ in their ideas about family behavior, because they do not face identical social circumstances. For example, those raised in a loving and affectionate home will have a different view of family life than those subjected to a conflict-ridden family in which they are exposed to considerable physical violence (see chapter 18).

In short, one of the values of the scientific study of marriage and the family is that it expands people's understanding of these important issues beyond their own personal experiences and those of their intimate associates. It also allows the personal to be put in the context of the more general, thus providing people a sense of where their experiences coincide and where they differ from those of others. This often generates analyses of why differences exist and whether they should exist. Transcending personal experience offers the opportunity to change that experience.

DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES IN THE STUDY OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Many different approaches can be used to gain an understanding of marriage and family life. Each approach gives a different view of the phenomena, highlighting some features and omitting others. No single perspective by itself is adequate to the task of full understanding. A number of years ago, Nye and Berardo (1966; Nye, 1976) defined twelve different ways in which scholars have approached the study of the family, perspectives they called "conceptual frameworks." More recently a limited number of these perspectives have come to be used most frequently.

The Structural-Functional Perspective

This view focuses on the structures that exist in society and how they function to create a harmonious, reasonably well-oiled system. The family is seen as a central social institution that contributes to societal cohesion. Structural-functional analysis of the family centers on the family's *social structure*, its network of social relationships (e.g., family roles such as child, husband/father, wife/mother), and the *functions* (positive contribution to a system's stability, such as raising children) it performs for society and for its members. This approach is especially evident in much of chapter 2 and sections of chapters 5, 6, and 8.

The Conflict Perspective

Directly opposing the structural-functional approach, the conflict perspective illuminates the disharmonious aspects of society. This perspective views society as a struggle between contending groups. The key issue for conflict theorists is who has the power to impose their view of the world on others. They see the family as a battleground, with conflict built into the relationship between husbands and wives and between parents and children. Conflict theorists expose the *dysfunctions* (actions that detract from the stability of a system) of social structures, including those of marital and family roles (see chapter 2). This view is especially relevant to various sections in chapter 11.

The Symbolic Interaction Perspective

The importance of communication and interaction is the focus of this perspective. In the words of Manis and Meltzer (1967: 137), "It is primarily concerned with the social symbolism and personal meaning of the individual's interaction with others." Within the family, this perspective stresses the ways in which family members interpret their own and others' roles, and how they see these as related to family life. The structural-functional approach tends to see people interacting in the family in terms of societally defined roles; symbolic interaction sees more flexibility in these roles because individuals negotiate agreements about them in the course of social interaction. This view appears throughout the book.

The Social Exchange Perspective

The premise of this perspective is straightforward—people form and maintain relationships that meet their needs and avoid or terminate those that do not. This approach assumes that people engage in a form of cost/benefit analysis in their intimate relationships. In short, each partner weighs the costs (time, effort, money, unhappy experiences) against the possible benefits (pleasure, affection, companionship, intimacy). Basic to this view is that people are motivated by a *hedonistic calculus* in which they seek to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. From this vantage point establishing and maintaining intimate relationships involve negotiations and bargaining between participants. This approach is explicit in chapter 7 on "partner choice."

The Family Life Cycle Perspective

Another way to study the family is to detail its evolution. Families, as well as individuals, have life cycles. Like good novels, they have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The life cycle perspective examines the characteristics of family life that are attributable to different stages of development. For example, there are different facets to family life before the arrival of children, when the children are in school, and after the children leave the parental home. This approach is especially evident in the last section of chapter 10.

Each of the perspectives outlined above gives a somewhat different view of marriage and family life. Thus, they contribute to a rounded understanding of these experiences.

THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

The study of marriage and the family is useful to the extent that it goes beyond the individual's personal experiences and biases. In order to accomplish this, some "objective" stance needs to be taken. Science offers just such a guide. Whether the scientific approach is used to study particle physics, developmental psychology or marriage and the family, there is a similarity in its aims and general principles. Miller (1986) has described these shared goals and principles in the context of family research, and these are detailed below.

The Scientific Approach

THE AIMS OF A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

Description. First and foremost, science aims to provide an accurate description of a phenomenon. Often this involves observing and recording or counting. In the study of the family, for example, it is important to know how many people marry each year, their age, whether they have been married before, and other pertinent facts. With these data researchers can calculate and describe the current marriage rate and compare it over time. They can trace trends in the age at which people marry and the frequency of remarriage.

Explanation. Description is merely the first step for a scientist. An explanation of the facts must follow. Why is the current marriage rate higher or lower than previously? Why is the age at first marriage increasing or decreasing? One of the important aspects of the scientific approach is its commitment to try to provide an explanation for the phenomenon under study. The changing marriage rate, for example, may be tied to specific changes in the economic conditions of society, while the age at marriage may be influenced by the educational and career opportunities currently available to young people.

Prediction. Whereas explanation looks backward to causes, prediction looks forward to consequences. If we understand the relationship between economic conditions and the marriage or divorce rate, we can predict changes in those rates when there are changes in the economy.

Intervention or Control. When events or practices are understood—when their occurrence can be explained and their consequences predicted—it may be possible to intervene to change the causative factors in order to change the likely consequences. Intervention and control are often more feasible in the physical and biological sciences than in the social sciences. In the former the phenomena are usually studied in the laboratory, where conditions can be manipulated by the experimenter. In the social sciences the events studied often occur in the real world and are subject to social, political, and ethical constraints that limit the ability to intervene or to control the situation. However, it is occasionally possible to ease the difficulty of negative consequences, even if they cannot be controlled or avoided. For example, knowing that certain economic conditions increase the divorce rate will not allow society to affect the divorce rate as economic conditions change; however, society can increase, decrease or reorganize its social support system to deal with the expected change in the divorce rate.

The Scientific Method

No matter what the discipline, *science* is the systematic attempt to obtain reliable knowledge by the use of empirical observation. The *scientific method* is a series of steps that are typically used to improve objectivity and reliability in the gathering and interpretation of empirical data. The steps outlined below are common to the research process; their order (or even use) may vary depending on the study.

STEPS IN THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Formulating a Researchable Problem. The problem to be studied must be defined carefully and in a way that permits it to be pursued scientifically. Whether divorce is good or bad is not a question that can be determined scientifically. Whether divorce leads to personality or school adjustment problems for young children can be answered. The first question is framed in moral terms for which science cannot provide an answer. The second way of framing the question defines bad in a way that has a measurable empirical basis.

Often the question is stated as an *hypothesis*, a statement that explicitly links two or more variables or observable events that can then be subject to empirical testing. For example, the second question might be constructed as the hypothesis that divorce leads to problems in personality and in school adjustment for children.

Developing an Appropriate Research Design. In order to test an hypothesis, an appropriate strategy for collecting and interpreting relevant data (a *research design*) must be constructed. In considering a research design, it is important to distinguish between the *independent variable* (the presumed cause) and the *dependent variable* (the presumed effect).

Cross-Sectional or Longitudinal Research. The type of study to be conducted is a question that needs to be addressed. At the outset, it is important to decide whether the research will be limited to a single instance (a *cross-sectional design*) or extend over time (a *longitudinal design*). One particularly useful form of longitudinal design for the study of marriage and the family is *cohort analysis*, which examines experiences common to a particular age group (e.g., the experiences of the "baby boomers" born from the end of World War II to the middle 1960s). The particular research design that is most appropriate depends on the question being addressed. This will be more evident as we discuss the various forms of collecting and analyzing data.

Collecting Relevant Data. The quality of research is no better than the data collected. Therefore, careful attention must be given to the manner of acquiring relevant information. There are several different methods of data collection, each having advantages and disadvantages.

Surveys, in which respondents are asked questions about their attitudes, values, characteristics, behavior or perceptions, are the most commonly used data-collection method in sociology. A survey may take the form of a *questionnaire*, a series of fixed questions or statements to which the person responds, or an *interview*, general questions that permit free-ranging answers by the respondent. Questionnaires have the advantage of convenience and cost. They can be mailed or handed to large numbers of respondents to complete at their leisure. Interviews require personal contact and time and thus are less convenient and more expensive to administer. However, good interviews are useful for uncovering subtle issues and probing unexpected responses which is typically not possible in questionnaires.

An important key to a good survey is that it be conducted on a *sample*, a relatively small number of people who represent a larger population. It is also important that the questions or statements on the survey be clear and appropriate so as to reduce the possibility of confusing and hence uninterpretable answers.

Observation. This is another data-gathering technique that examines the actions of individuals or groups but does not generally question them or influence their behavior. In general, there are two types of observation: *detached observation* takes place when the researcher stays outside of the situation being observed, and *participant observation* occurs when the researcher is active in the situation that he or she is observing. Studying a children's play group through a one-way mirror is an example of detached observation, while studying a social group by joining it and observing its activities is an example of participant observation. Perhaps the most famous example of the latter is Whyte's (1943) study of a group of Boston slum youth.

Detached observation is limited by the availability of opportunities to study what is occurring. Only the public face is visible; behind-the-scenes discussions and plans and the reasons why the observed individuals behaved the way they did are not generally available to the researcher using this mode. On the other hand, the participant/observer runs the risk of losing objectivity, of becoming more participant than observer. There are also ethical issues involved if the participant doesn't inform the group that he or she is participating in the group in order to collect data.

Experiments. Experiments are designed to collect data under controlled conditions. The experiment is often taken as the hallmark of science, though it is only one particular data-collection technique. Its prestige derives from its ability to use controls to link cause (the independent variable) and effect (the dependent variable).

The typical model of the experiment is the *laboratory experiment*, common in the physical and biological sciences as well as in experimental and physiological psychology. The basic framework of this style of research is the *experimental method*, a technique involving an *experimental group* of subjects exposed to some variable and a *control group* of comparable subjects not exposed to the "experimental variable." Both groups are "measured" before and after the introduction of the experimental variable. Since the groups were comparable before the experiment, any difference between them following the experiment must be due to the experimental variable. With this technique all other relevant variables can be controlled and the effect of the experimental variable assessed.

The *field experiment* attempts to approximate the same kind of control over a situation in the natural environment through statistical manipulation. However, the same rigorous control that is accomplished in the laboratory is rarely possible in the "field." On the other hand, for many purposes in social science, and for marriage and family in particular, the laboratory situation is unnatural and the results are not always applicable to situations outside of the laboratory.

Secondary Analysis. This is research that analyzes existing data rather than collecting new information specifically for a new study. One form of secondary analysis used frequently in the field of marriage and the family is the census and other government statistics. These data provide valuable information on important and relevant issues such as marital status, household composition, and marriage and divorce rates. Secondary analysis also uses data from previous research studies, church records, newspaper articles, and personal documents such as letters, diaries, and autobiographies.

The cost of doing secondary analysis is often less than that required to collect new data. However, the quality of the original data may vary. Census data and most government statistics are usually of high quality. Personal documents need to be used with caution because it is not always clear who was the intended audience and what were the intended aims.

Case Studies. Case studies are based on information obtained from a few individuals and families, often over an extended period of time. These data generally derive from participation in counseling or therapy programs with psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and marriage counselors. Often the object of these activities is not to gather research but to provide help to those people in therapy. Also, the theoretical view and professional training of the therapist/counselor may lead to emphasizing certain aspects over others equally important to the total picture. Despite these limitations, however, clinical case studies often provide a richness of detail and tone that is generally lacking in other, more "objective" data-gathering techniques.

Analyzing the Data

Data must not only be collected, they must also be analyzed. Essentially, new information must be brought to bear on the original questions that generated the research.

ELEMENTS IN DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical Analyses and Probabilities. Scientists use statistical techniques to analyze data. They may use *descriptive statistics* such as *measures of central tendency* (the average value, mean or median), or *measures of dispersion* (variation of scores around the average, the standard deviation or variance), to describe what has been found. More commonly, scientists use *inferential statistics*, which allow them to judge whether the research findings differ from chance and thus whether they support the study's hypothesis and apply to the population from which the research sample was drawn.

It is important to understand that sample statistics are based on probability theory. That means that they describe the likely relationship among variables in a sample; it does not mean that the relationship is true for all members of the population. Neither can statistical analysis pinpoint the discovered relationship for any particular individual or group. For example, most research shows that those who marry while in their teens have a higher divorce rate than those who marry later. But not all teen marriages fail, and which specific ones will fail is not predictable by the statistical association between the two variables.

Interpreting the Findings. Statistical analysis provides a way of looking at the relationship between variables. How these relationships are interpreted, however, depends on *theories*, which are explanations for the relationship among variables. Generally, theories are useful if they tie together many relationships into one or several explanations. Reiss's theory of the process of falling in love (chapter 4) or the various theories of partner selection (chapter 7) are useful examples of trying to tie together a number of findings into a more general theory.

Hypotheses to be tested are typically derived from a more general theory. The research findings are then interpreted in light of this theory and used to confirm, modify, or cast doubt on it.

Typically, the family is defined as a relatively permanent collection of individuals connected by ancestry, marriage, or adoption. Recently in the United States, looser definitions of this intimate relationship (such as domestic partnerships) have occurred. Whereas the family is a social group, marriage is the set of laws and practices that establishes it and guides the actions of the marital partners. The importance of studying marriage and the family derives from the fact that they are central to the experience of most people and, at the same time, are key institutions in society.

Despite the centrality of the family, there are a number of common misconceptions that complicate its study. These include the tendencies to idealize the past, to confuse what the family is with what people wish it to be, and to be limited to personal experience. Furthermore, variations exist both among societies and within society in the structure and processes of marriage and family life.

The study of marriage and family can be approached from different perspectives. The structural-functional perspective looks at the structure of the family to see how this setup functions to create a harmonious relationship. The conflict perspective looks at the dysfunctional aspects of family life. The symbolic interaction perspective focuses on the communicative and interactive patterns that give meaning to marriage and family life, while the social exchange perspective sees marriage and the family in terms of their cost/benefit ratio. Finally, the family life cycle perspective examines the family in terms of its different stages.

The family can be studied scientifically, starting with the formulation of a researchable problem. An appropriate research design needs to be developed, leading to the collection of appropriate data. These data are then analyzed using statistical techniques based on probability theory. Ultimately these statistical analyses need to be interpreted in light of the theory that generated the original research questions.

2

Cross-Cultural and Historical Variation

This chapter will explore marriage and family patterns, which vary considerably throughout the world. It will also examine the family as a social institution from both a structural-functionalist and a conflict theory perspective. Finally, the chapter will briefly detail worldwide changes in marriage and the family in the distant past and then look more specifically at the American family in more recent times.

A description of cross-cultural and historical variation should provide a sense of the diversity of these two important facets of social life. Moreover, it serves as backdrop to the main discussion of this book by providing a context within which to view marriage and the family in contemporary American society.

ESTABLISHING FAMILIES: MARRIAGE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

The family occurs in all societies. It is established through *marriage*, a set of social and legal customs that define the manner in which men and women are united to form a family and the reciprocal rights and obligations of the marriage partners. Marital customs involve both regulations that guide the selection and the actual methods used in acquiring a marital partner, as well as the various forms that marriage can take.

Partner-Selection Regulations

Throughout the world there are two basic regulations that both guide and restrict the choice of a marital partner—exogamy and endogamy.

EXOGAMY

The more fundamental partner-selection regulation is *exogamy*, which denotes a class of individuals with whom a person is denied both marriage and sexual relations. Perhaps the best-known example of an exogamous rule is the *incest taboo*, which specifically forbids a marital or sexual relationship between close family members. All societies have an incest taboo, though there have been occasional exceptions made for the royal family in, for example, the ancient Egyptian and the Incan empires. Though the incest taboo precludes relationships between parents and children and between siblings, the full range of specific family members included in this taboo varies from society to society.

Exogamy, and specifically the incest taboo, requires individuals to form relationships outside their current family. This tends to result in useful social and economic alliances; it also leads to increased social and cultural diversity in society.

ENDOGAMY

The other partner-selection regulation is *endogamy*, which specifies the class of individuals within which a person is able and encouraged to find a marital partner. In small societies the boundary of the endogamous rule is often the boundary of the society itself. In larger and more complex societies, such as the United States, endogamy encourages marriage between people with similar backgrounds in race, religion, ethnicity, and social class (see chapter 7).

In practice, endogamy serves to increase group cohesion and solidarity. It often maintains the existing social structure by requiring or encouraging marriage among those similar in social locations and with similar social characteristics.

THE FIELD OF ELIGIBLES

Taken together, exogamy and endogamy define the person's *field of eligibles*, the socially approved pool of people who are potential marital and sexual partners (see Fig. 2.1).

Endogamy creates an external boundary of potential mates by ruling out those beyond the perimeter. Exogamy also serves as an interior boundary by protecting those within the inner circle from being considered potential marital or sexual partners.

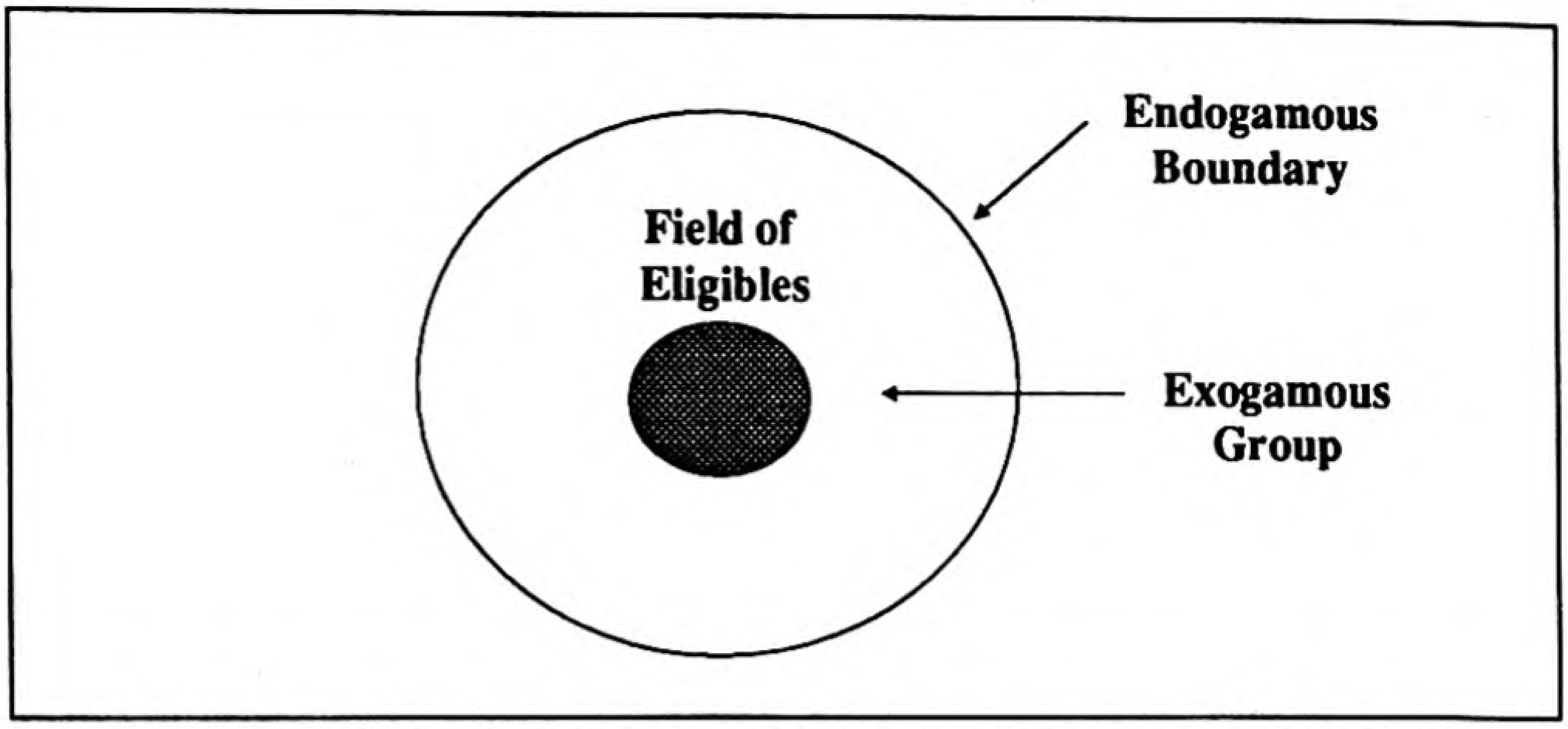

Fig. 2.1 Field of Eligibles Established by Endogamy and Exogamy

Partner-Selection Practices

The actual manner in which marital partners are selected varies around the world. Four major ways have been identified in which a marital partner is acquired.

MARRIAGE BY CAPTURE

The least frequent method is to capture a partner by force. This has occurred primarily in hunting societies and those in which there is an excess of men. In order to improve the balance of men and women for marital purposes, men raid other societies and capture women as brides. Murdock (1949) doubts whether this practice ever actually occurred, though Stephens (1963: 172–178) reports on such a case among the Cheyenne.

Some have raised the question of whether the American practice of carrying the bride across the threshold is actually a remnant of marriage by capture, in which the bride was dragged into the man's home against her will. Similarly, the wedding ring, which many interpret as a circle of unending love, has been seen by some as the symbolic remains of the shackle used on captured brides.

MARRIAGE BY PURCHASE

Considerably more common is the purchase of a marital partner, making clear that marriage is an economic as well as a social union. In marriage by purchase, some form of economic exchange is required for the selection of a marital partner. The cost may be borne by the person purchasing a partner, that person's family or the larger social unit. Stephens (1963: 210–212) has detailed five types of economic arrangements involved in partner choice.

Bride Price. One type involves payment to the family of the bride by the groom or his family. As is evident in Table 2.1, this is the most common form of marriage by purchase.

Bride Service. Another type has the same intent as bride price, compensating the bride's family for loss of her services or for guarding her "virtue." Called the "price of a virgin," this method involves the groom's performing service to the bride's family rather than paying in money or economic goods.

Dowry. This type is the reverse of the other two forms. The bride or her family provides payment to the groom or his family. Presumably this ensures that the woman will have a husband.

Gift Exchange. This type is evident when both families provide payment or some form of economic exchange to each other. In effect it is like the joint operation of bride price and dowry.

Women Exchange. This type involves an exchange of women. Two families may enter into such an exchange in which each family's daughter is exchanged as the wife of one of the men in the other family.

The data listed in Table 2.1 show that substantially more societies provide some form of compensation to the bride or her family than to the groom or his family. One explanation for this difference revolves around the issue of unequal power in the family. In most societies men have more power than women; in particular they control the right to divorce. Bride price and bride service are generally "not refundable" upon the termination of a marriage, while dowry is. Thus men have to consider carefully a decision to divorce their wives, especially if they wish to remarry and need to pay another bride price or bride service.

Form of marriage payment	number	%
Bride price (substantial or token)	260	48
Bride service	75	14
Dowry	24	4
Gift exchange	15	3
Women exchange	16	3
No marriage payment or exchange	152	28
Total	542	100

Table 2.1 Number and Percent of Societies Practicing Different Forms of Marriage by Purchase. Adapted from Murdock (1957)

Though direct economic consideration in the choice of a marital partner is not unknown in the United States (e.g., marrying the boss's daughter to advance a career), it is neither common nor considered appropriate.

MARRIAGE BY ARRANGEMENT

Marriage is a solemn *social* act in many societies. It has vast implications for the social structure of society, particularly in its stratification system (Goodman, 1992: chap. 9). Consequently, many societies require marital partner selection by arrangement rather than free choice. In most cases the arrangements are made by parents or close relatives. While in principle marriages can be arranged for either women or men, arrangements are usually made for women, who are, in Stephens's words (1963: 190), "helpless pawns in the marriage plans of the parents and kin."

Marriage by arrangement occurs in societies that view marriage not just as a relationship between two individuals but as an alliance between families. Goodsell (1915: 189) highlights this view by quoting a German peasant, who says, "It's not a man that marries a maid, but field marries field, vineyard marries vineyard, cattle marries cattle." From this perspective the family is seen as having a legitimate and important stake in the choice of a marriage partner. Young people are often considered too immature to take into account the social, economic, and political implications of marriage; therefore, the contract needs to be arranged for them. Sometimes a professional matchmaker is used; more often, however, the family takes on this responsibility for itself.

Levirate and Sororate. These are two interesting versions of arranged marriages, both of which occur upon the death of a spouse. In the *levirate*, when a man dies his brother or other close male kin takes on his family obligations. Either by law or by custom, the widow and her children become his wife and children. This is seen as a societal mechanism to ensure the care and protection of women and children when the husband/father dies.

A second form is the *sororate*, in which a deceased wife is replaced as a marital partner by her sister or other female relative. As with the levirate, in some societies this arrangement is required by law, while in others it is the custom.

MARRIAGE BY CONSENT (CONJUGAL COURTSHIP)

The final form of partner-selection practice is the one most readers will recognize. It involves marriage by the agreement and arrangement of the two people themselves. This is the practice in the United States and in most Western countries. Despite the formal freedom to choose one's own marital partner, it is important to note the substantial degree of influence, both direct and indirect, that American parents play in this process.

Outside of the West, marriage by consent is a fairly uncommon form of partner selection. In fact, Stephens's study (1963) found that of his sample of fifty-three societies, only five societies other than the contemporary United States allowed the young people free choice of a marital partner. Six others, including colonial America, permitted the two people to choose, subject to the approval of their parents. In short, the freedom Americans have to choose their own mates is rare in the history of marriage.

Types of Marriage

There are two principal forms that marriage takes—monogamy and polygamy. Each of these involves different arrangements between men and women and has different implications for the nature of family life.

MONOGAMY

This arrangement, the marriage of one man to one woman at a time, is most familiar to Americans. Monogamy is especially useful when a society has a *sex ratio* of 100, an equal number of men and women, at the age at which most people marry. It then provides the maximum number of marriage opportunities for the largest number of people. At least statistically there is a man for each woman and a woman for each man.

Though monogamy was and is the most common form of marriage practiced around the world, it is not the most preferred form. In Murdock's (1949) sample of 250 societies, only forty-three, or 17 percent, preferred monogamy.

The relatively small size of the monogamous family guarantees that the emotional gratification and family responsibilities will be centered on a limited number of adults. Whether this is an advantage or not depends on whether the small family group carries the entire burden of the typical family obligations, or whether these are shared by a wider kin network and by the society as a whole. An example of the latter case occurs when society assumes responsibility for education or for providing medical care for the family (e.g., in most socialist societies). However, when one adult is lost through death or divorce the remaining partner typically has to shoulder both sets of responsibilities. This contrasts with the next marital form to be discussed.

POLYGAMY

Polygamy is the general term referring to a marital system that permits plural spouses at the same time. It can take three different forms.

Polygyny. One form occurs when one man is married to two or more women at the same time. In Murdock's (1949) study, fully three-quarters of the 250 societies permitted this form, making it the most popular but not the most practiced. This difference is often linked to the economic and status systems of society as well as its sex ratio. Additional wives require more resources and not many men can afford to take advantage of a polygynous system. Those who do, often possess more wealth and social status; having more than one wife further increases that social status. Polygyny is also less frequently practiced because to do so would restrict the marriage opportunities of many men. Since most societies have a relatively equal sex ratio during the typical years of marriage, polygyny would severely reduce the available wives for many men.

In some societies there are restrictions on whom a man can take for an additional wife. When additional wives are limited to the sister or close female relative of a man's present wife, the practice is called *sororal polygyny*. While in most polygynous families each wife has a separate dwelling, Stephens (1963) finds this to be less the case under sororal polygyny. He interprets this as the strength of the sibling or family tie that can better tolerate potential sexual rivalry.

Despite the sexual fantasies of many men in monogamous societies, polygyny is more often a social and economic rather than sexual relationship. The additional wives are valued more for the domestic and economic services they perform and the status they bring than for any further sexual benefits.

Polyandry. This refers to a system of marriage of one woman to two or more men at a time. It is a relatively rare practice, occurring in only two societies in Murdock's (1949) study. It occurs most often in societies with an imbalanced sex ratio (more men than women) and experiencing severe economic conditions. However, female infanticide has been found to be linked to polyandrous societies. Thus it is not clear whether an imbalanced sex ratio leads to polyandry or whether having established polyandry for some other reason, a society uses female infanticide to maintain the necessary imbalance.

As with polygyny, in some societies the choice of additional spouses is restricted to the siblings or close male relatives of earlier spouses. This is called *fraternal polyandry*. Stephens (1963) finds fraternal polyandry to be more prevalent than nonfraternal polyandry, in which there is no kinship between husbands. As with sororal polygyny, he believes this serves to reduce sexual friction caused by sharing the same wife.

It has been suggested that the relative rarity of polyandry when compared with polygyny may reflect the substantially greater jealousy of men than women in sharing a sexual and marital partner. There is, however, no hard evidence to substantiate this view.

Group Marriage. This occurs when two or more men are collectively married to two or more women. It is even more rare than polyandry. In fact, Murdock (1949) found no case of it among his 250 societies. Stephens (1963) argues that it does exist and is typically an extension of fraternal polyandry, in which brothers take on additional wives (polygyny) and link them into the common family.

If the reports are to be believed, the followers of Charles Manson and the Rev. Jim Jones practiced group marriage. Some of the communal arrangements of the 1960s and 1970s also had the flavor of group marriage.

It should be clear from the previous discussion that neither monogamy nor polygamy is the natural or only appropriately moral intimate relationship between men and women. What form marriage takes is linked to the customs, traditions, and values of society.

THE FAMILY IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Forms of the Family

The *family* is an important and relatively permanent social group composed of individuals who are related by ancestry, marriage or adoption. Though most people tend to believe that the form of the family that exists in their society is the best, there are three general forms that the family has taken throughout the world.

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

The primary form of the family, and the one that Americans clearly recognize, is the *nuclear family*, which typically consists of a married man and woman with their children. In the contemporary world various versions of this form have arisen, including single-parent families, childless/childfree families, and "domestic partnerships" of gay and lesbian couples which are increasingly gaining legal status as the functional equivalent of the marital bond.

Nuclear Family of Orientation. This is the family into which a person is born and holds the status of child. Its name derives from the fact that it is in this family that we derive our basic orientation to life.

Nuclear Family of Procreation. The second type is one that a person creates through marriage and in which he or she has the status of adult.

Most people are members of both types of nuclear families and thus experience the family from different perspectives. While ordinarily this dual perspective causes little problem, on occasion the different responsibilities to members of these central social groups may cause strain and require a difficult balancing act. Moreover the increase in life expectancy in the United States has resulted in parents living longer than previously and has produced the "sandwich generation" of mature adults who are caught between their desire to meet the needs of their parents and those of their growing children.

THE EXTENDED FAMILY

Another type of family is the *extended family*, which consists of two or more nuclear families bound together by parent-child and sibling ties. Sometimes this type of family is called the "consanguineal" family because what binds the members together are the ties of "blood." Typically the extended family involves two or more generations living together, i.e., children, parents, and grandparents. The extended family is larger than the nuclear family, extends over more generations, and thus is often more durable—as Alex Haley portrayed in his book *Roots*. Furthermore, the greater number of members means that the typical responsibilities of adults in the family may be more widely shared.

THE POLYGAMOUS FAMILY

The third general type of family is the *polygamous family*, which consists of two or more nuclear families linked by the marital bond. In the polygamous family there is one person who is the common spouse to two or more others—a common husband in the case of polygyny or a common wife in the case of polyandry. The polygamous family consists of this central person, his or her marital partners, and their children. Polygamy is the only family form that is currently illegal in the United States, though it was practiced by the Mormons earlier in American history.

Kinship and Patterns of Descent

Kinship is one of the most important aspects of family life. Murdock (1949: 2) defined *kinship* as "a structured system of relationships, in which individuals are bound to one another by complex, interlocking, and ramifying ties." Since kin are relatives who have claims on each other that non-kin do not have, the issue of who is kin demands attention in all societies. Thus societies have established *rules of descent* for defining kin. The fact that such rules exist testifies to the importance of social as well biological definitions of kinship. Descent is important because it is the mechanism through which property, names, and various kinds of resources are passed down in a family. In many societies lineage also plays a role in defining eligible marriage partners. Descent can be traced in two major ways.

UNILINEAL DESCENT

In *unilineal descent*, heritage is determined through one parent.

Patrilineal Descent. This form of descent traces kinship only through the male line, from father to son. More societies practice this form of descent than any other. It was even more common in preindustrial pastoral and agricultural societies, which were based on the domestication of animals and the cultivation of land, because men were more likely to be the ones who provided the family with its necessary resources.

Matrilineal Descent. This form traces heritage exclusively through the female line, from mother to daughter. This form was more common in horticultural societies (based on the cultivation of plants), in which women were the main contributors to the family's necessities.

NONUNILINEAL DESCENT

In *nonunilineal descent*, heritage is traced through both parents.

Bilateral Descent. In one form, practiced in the United States, kinship involves the men and women relatives of both parents.

Double Descent. The other form is a simple joining of patrilineal and matrilineal systems. In this case, heritage is traced through the men on the father's side and the women on the mother's side.

Patterns of Residence

Where people live after they marry is an important social issue. Distance from one or both of the couple's parents affects the latter's likely influence and involvement in this new family. Consequently, societal customs on residence reveal differences in power and influence between men and women. The anthropological literature suggests four common patterns around the world.

In *patrilocal residence*, by far the most common form, the new couple establishes residence with or near the groom's family. In *matrilocal residence*, the new couple lives with or near the bride's family. *Bilocal residence* provides for a choice; the new couple may live with or near either the bride's family or groom's family, but it must be one or the other. Often the choice is based on which family is better able to help the new couple with necessary resources. The fourth form is the one practiced in the United States, *neolocal residence*, in which the couple establishes a new residence independent of either of their nuclear families of orientation. What the new couple sacrifices in material help and services, it makes up for in independence—a prized commodity for the young in American society.

Authority in the Family

Patterns of descent and residence are indirect indicators of authority in the family. However, authority in the family can be and has been studied more directly (Stephens, 1963). There are three general forms of allocating authority in the family. In *patriarchy*, the most frequent form, authority is vested in the man. When family authority is allocated to the woman, a rare occurrence, it is called *matriarchy*. In the *egalitarian* form, authority is vested equally in both the man and the woman. In a related form, called *divided power*, the man and the woman have separate spheres of family life in which one or the other is given authority. It is this latter form that characterizes many traditional families in American society, though contemporary families are moving closer to the egalitarian model.

The Family as a Social Institution

The family has been analyzed as one of society's major *social institutions*, a stable structural arrangement to deal with an important societal concern. Structural-functionalists (see chapter 1) have focused on the supportive functions that the family plays for society. Conflict theorists, on the other hand, point to the dysfunctions or negative consequences of the family. We will examine each in turn.

FUNCTIONALISTS' FAMILY ANALYSIS

Functions of the Family. From the structural-functional perspective (especially Murdock, 1949; Parsons and Bales, 1955), five key functions stand out as important contributions of the family to society.

Regulation of sexual activity occurs in all societies; no society allows completely free sexual expression. Typically sexual relations are restricted to those who are married, whether in a monogamous or polygamous system.

Replacement of societal members is essential for the survival of any society. The limitation of sexual relationships to the family is seen by structural-functionalists as providing an orderly mechanism for replacing societal members who die or leave the society, an obvious necessity if a society is to continue to survive.

Socialization involves the social and cultural reproduction of society. Through socialization in the family, society maintains and passes on its social and cultural heritage across generations. Thus social and cultural reproduction complements the biological reproduction required for societal continuation.

Social placement in the family provides each individual with an initial social identity and social position. Family status plays a significant role in the continued development of the individual and in later life experiences.

Intimacy and companionship are often seen as the hallmarks of family life. This social context provides for some of the most important of human needs—affection, intimate connection with another human being, and nurturance.

CONFLICT THEORISTS' FAMILY ANALYSIS

Dysfunctions of the Family. In contrast to the structural-functionalist view of the family as a beneficial social arrangement, conflict theorists stress the harmful and destructive aspects of family life.

The subordination of women is accomplished through the family, argued Friedrich Engels (1902: original, 1889). Wives were considered to be their husbands' property. The bearing and rearing of children kept women out of public life and out of societal decision processes.

Violence in the family is a common and increasing occurrence. In addition to the current concern about domestic violence (see chapter 17), a significant proportion of homicides in the United States involves family members, often a spouse.

Perpetuation of the existing stratification system is carried out through the family. Families pass on their economic advantages or disadvantages to subsequent generations, thus reducing the openness of *social mobility*, the ability to change social class position. Children of the wealthy tend to get more education, have better jobs, be healthier, and live longer than those less well off.

Delegitimation of different lifestyles results from the predominance of one accepted form of intimate relationship. In the United States, for example, heterosexual monogamy leading to a nuclear family generally dominated by the man makes other possible arrangements less likely to occur or to be socially acceptable. A different sexual preference or a man's primary emphasis on domestic and child care responsibilities instead of on his job does not have the same social acceptance as the more standard model.

In general, conflict theorists see the emphasis on one particular model for intimate relationships, and particularly the one that is common in Western society, as severely dysfunctional.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

No short volume is able to do justice to the richness of the historical record about the nature of marriage and family life or to fully describe how these earlier structures and practices influenced the shape and form of the contemporary institution. Thus, this final section concludes with a brief overview that spans the period from ancient times to the present situation.

Europe and the Near East

THE DISTANT PAST

Ancient Times. The historical record of marriage and family life dates back to biblical times. In the earliest period, information about Mesopotamia, the ancient Hebrews, and Egypt portrays a patriarchal family established through early arranged marriages. Marriage was monogamous in Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome, and polygynous in Egypt and among the ancient Hebrews. Large, extended families were common and some payment upon marriage—either bride price, bride service, or dowry—was typical. Divorce was permitted and usually controlled by the man. The practice of the woman wearing a wedding ring is believed to have begun in ancient Rome, or possibly Egypt. Good health was so important an issue in Greece and Rome that these societies practiced *infanticide*, putting infants to death or allowing them to die if they were sick or deformed. In Rome, however, five neighbors had to agree with this parental decision.

The Middle Ages. Historians usually date the Middle Ages from about the fifth to the thirteenth century A.D. During this period the family was often considered to be the major economic unit in society. Marriages continued to be arranged and patriarchal, while divorce continued to be available and controlled by men. The extended family was common. Childhood was unknown. In fact, children were considered so inherently sinful that strong discipline and even harsh punishment were quite common. They were also seen as commodities and often either sold into slavery or abandoned to monasteries. In essence, children were regarded less as children than as miniature adults.

The Renaissance and the Reformation. From the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries family life continued to be centered around agriculture and the family was still the major economic unit. Though arranged marriages still predominated, some elements of choice of a marital partner began to occur. The growing power of the church began to impose itself on the institution of the family, and the church and state often battled to control marriage. As trade and crafts increased, boys were often removed from their families and apprenticed to others to learn a skill. Girls remained at home to learn their domestic responsibilities from their mothers.

THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SCENE

The Colonial Heritage. The Old World tradition of arranged marriages began to break down in the United States and conjugal courtship became common, though permission of the father of the intended bride was generally required. The family continued to be patriarchal and, despite folklore, was moderate in size and nuclear rather than extended in form. Children were still seen as an economic commodity, a valuable one in a basically agricultural society; they were necessary for the work required on family farms, the major economic structure at that time. The conflict between the church and the state for control over marriage continued in America, but the allocation of laws regarding marriage and family life to the individual colonies and later, the states, led to results that varied according to geographical location. This was particularly evident in laws governing divorce.

The Industrial Period. As the United States began to industrialize and fewer families were engaged in agriculture, the nature of family life began to change. Men took jobs in factories and other locations outside the home, while the women's role as partners in a joint farming venture decreased. Women's responsibilities were increasingly centered around home and children. Child care grew more important and responsibility for the *socialization* of children became more widespread. The church, schools, and peer groups gained influence in this process. Childhood was seen as important and parenting a major responsibility of women. Thus the traditional division of family responsibilities—the man as "breadwinner" and the woman as "homemaker"—became firmly established.

The Twentieth Century Through the 1950s. Though the two World Wars and the Suffragist movement in the early part of this century affected the nature of family life, the traditional pattern of marriage and family life was typical of an industrialized and suburbanized American society. The 1950s exemplified this view of the American home through the images of family portrayed on television. This was the era of "Father Knows Best," "Leave It to Beaver," and "Ozzie and Harriet." Especially after the hardships and personal tragedies of World War II, stable and comfortable family life was a goal of most Americans. The whole tone of American culture was pro–family. Marriage was popular, the divorce rate was low, and the "baby boom" became a fact of social life.

Upsetting Tradition: The 1960s and 1970s. The social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s did not leave the family untouched. Especially important was the feminist movement, which pressed for a change in the relationships between men and women, most particularly in the context of the family. Also important was the countercultural movement, which promoted an expanded view of sexuality. The result of these social movements was the beginning of a virtual revolution in the way men and women related to one another and in the role of sexuality in human relationships.

This was a contentious period of time. Many people had difficulty making the transition—some never did—to the different form of relationship between men and women. Traditional gender roles and relationships came under attack and were reconsidered by many people. Traditional values, including—but not limited to—the place of sexuality in human affairs, were similarly put under the microscope and, for many, found wanting.

During this period, families shrank in size. Americans began marrying later and divorcing more frequently. In fact, the first "no fault" divorce law was passed in 1970. There was an increase in single-parent families and dual wage-earner families. *Cohabitation*, an unmarried man and an unmarried woman living together, increased dramatically and became a more frequent part of the typical courtship pattern. The Supreme Court's *Roe* v. *Wade* decision legalized abortion, giving women more control over their reproductive functions. In short, the world of the family began to change radically during this period.

Fundamental Change: The 1980s and Beyond. The 1980s was a period of consolidation of the changes initiated earlier. The number of dual-earner family households increased and became common. A conservative backlash arose to try to counter the radical changes initiated in the 1960s and 1970s. Family policy became an important political battleground. Conservatives began to push for reacceptance of traditional family values, and the anti-abortion movement began to assert itself, forcing limitations on the earlier relatively unrestricted right to abortion during the first six months of pregnancy. The Equal Rights Amendment was proposed but lapsed because it was not ratified by a sufficient number of states to become law. Political battles occurred over pornography in the media and in art.

Issues of privacy and choice grew increasingly important. The gay community began to assert itself, demanding rights and legal benefits for homosexual relationships equal to those long held in heterosexual families. School programs in family life and sex education became widespread, though they have been a source of contention in many communities. The availability of contraceptives, changing cultural values, and greater freedom and mobility of the young led to considerable change in sexual behavior. The AIDS crisis led to an initial conservative backlash against growing cries for sexual freedom. However, it also created a forum in which to discuss sexuality more openly.

In short, many of the radical changes initiated in the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s not only began to take on institutional form but also generated a conservative attempt to rescind them. The remainder of this book will explore many of these issues in considerable detail.

Marriage customs vary throughout the world. However, two fundamental rules, exogamy (especially the incest taboo) and endogamy, guide the creation of a field of eligible marital partners. In practice marital partners are acquired by capture, purchase (most commonly through a bride price), arrangement, or consent. Marriage can involve either one spouse (monogamy) or plural spouses (polygamy), of which one form, polygyny, is the most preferred.

While the nuclear family is the primary unit in most societies, its predominance is being challenged in contemporary America by the growth of single-parent families, childless/childfree families, and domestic partnerships. The extended family and the polygamous family are other forms of the family; they are created by different combinations of the nuclear family and are larger and more durable over generations than the nuclear family.

Kinship ties bind individuals to one another. Societies vary in how they reckon lineage, where the newly established family will live, and what authority patterns exist between the adult family members. The most common forms are patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence, and patriarchal authority.

Structural-functionalists have tended to see the family as an important and beneficial institution in society, one that serves to regulate sexual activity, reproduce membership in society, socialize the young, provide initial social status, and meet important human needs for intimacy and companionship. Conflict theorists, on the other hand, see the family as a *form that subordinates the interests and needs of women, as a setting for relatively unchecked violent behavior, and as a mechanism that perpetuates an unfair stratification system and stifles different lifestyles.*

Families vary not only over geographical space but also historical time. Large, extended, patriarchal families using arranged marriages were the rule in the distant past. Gradually they gave way and colonial America shifted to a system of conjugal courtship and eventually to the predominance of the nuclear family. The social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s and the conservative backlash of the 1980s thrust marriage and family life into the political arena.

3

Gender Roles

Sex and gender are two different concepts. The first is biologically rooted and the second is socially constructed. This chapter uses both to explore the differences and similarities between men and women. Special attention is given to the origin and present status of gender roles and how they are transmitted across generations through the process of socialization. Finally, the chapter discusses the connection between gender roles and intimate relationships.

SEX AND GENDER

The terms "sex" and "gender" are often used interchangeably. While the two are related, however, there is an important difference between them. Sex is biologically determined, while gender is culturally defined.

Sex: A Biological Concept

CHROMOSOMAL PATTERNS

Sex refers to a set of biological characteristics that distinguish females from males in all species. Among humans, sex originates at conception as both parents contribute equally to the twenty-three pairs of chromosomes that are their offspring's biological inheritance. The sex chromosomes determine the human being's biological sex (see Fig. 3.1). Females have two X chromosomes; males have an X and a Y chromosome. In other words, the determination of a child's sex depends on the father. If he contributes an X chromosome to the mother's X chromosome, the child will be female. If, on the other hand, he contributes a Y chromosome, the child will be male.

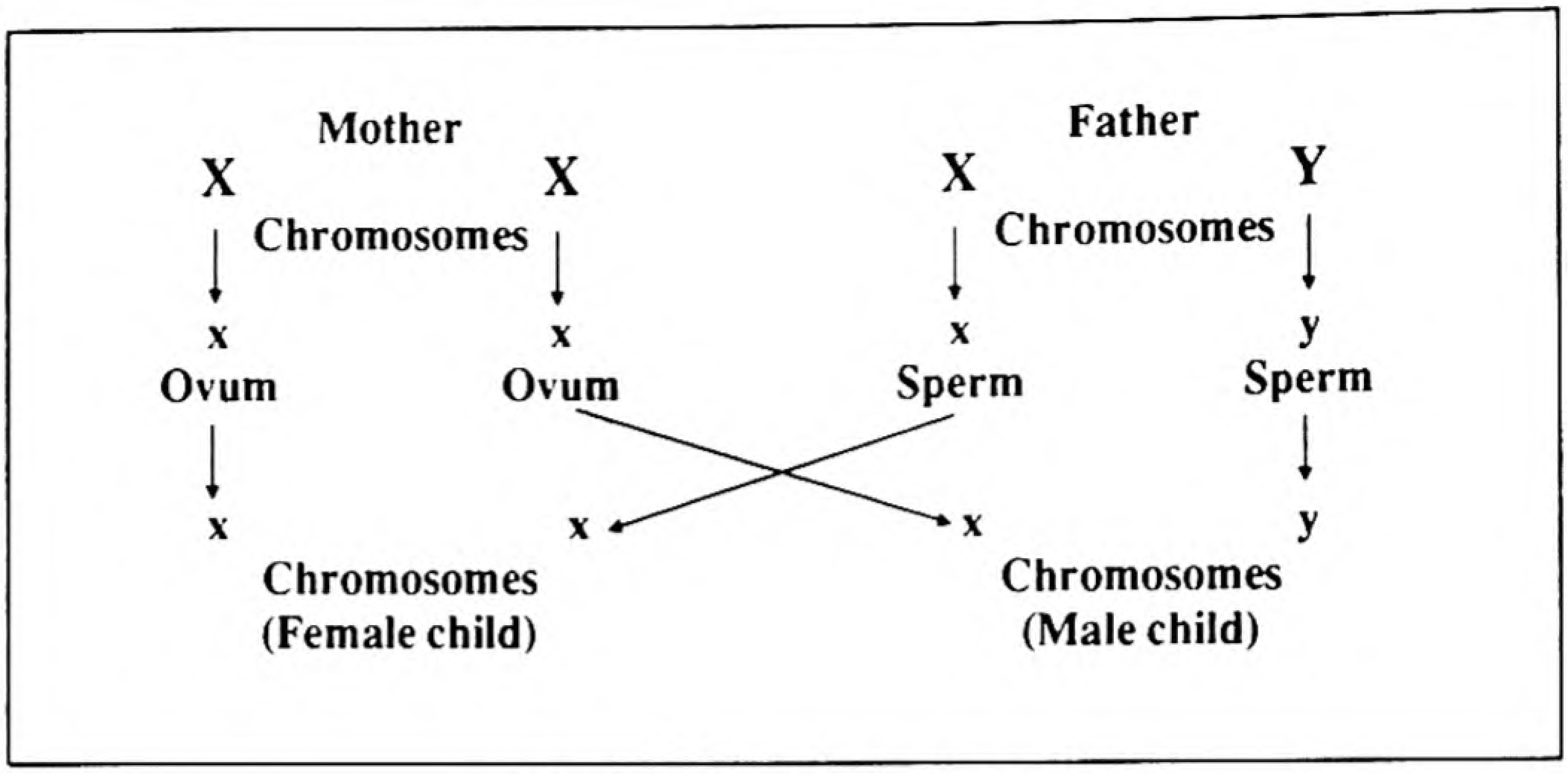

Fig. 3.1 Sex Determination

The different chromosomal patterns, XX or XY, play an important role in leading to other biological differences between females and males. The XY pattern is necessary for the development of testicular tissue after about the fifth week in the developing *embryo*. In addition, *testosterone*, the male sex hormone, is secreted and directs further development of the male genitals. The absence of the testes and its hormones allows the female genitals to develop. In short, with the extremely rare exception of the *hermaphrodite*, a person who has some combination of both female and male genitals, every human being is biologically either female or male.

SEX CHARACTERISTICS

The identification of a person as either female or male depends not only on the *primary sex characteristics*, the genitals that are necessary to the reproductive process though not usually observable, but more commonly on the *secondary sex characteristics*, the different and usually observable physical differences between females and males. For example, females have larger breasts and wider hips than males; males have broader chests and more body hair than females. Both primary and secondary sex characteristics contribute to a person's identity as either female or male.

Gender: A Social Concept

The terms "female" and "male" have been used in the previous section on sex because they refer to a biological description of categories of human beings and other species as well. The terms "men" and "women," however, signify *gender*, which refers to the cultural and social characteristics that different societies assign to males and females. Though the central biological characteristics of females and males (e.g., the differences in the primary and secondary sex characteristics) are consistent throughout the human species, societies differ considerably in the characteristics they assign to men and women. This social variation is captured in the concept of *gender* *roles*, the pattern of behavior, rights, and obligations viewed as appropriate for each sex.

Sex vs. Gender

The distinction between sex and gender is relevant to understanding marriage and family life. With the exception of relatively rare transsexual surgery, which can under certain conditions transform key sexual characteristics of one sex into those of the other, biological sex differences are universal and do not change with time or location. As social constructions, however, gender differences not only vary by society and by era, but are capable of considerable and sometimes relatively rapid change. The transformation over the past several decades in what is considered appropriate "feminine" behavior in American society is a case in point, and will be discussed throughout this book.

HOW DIFFERENT ARE MEN AND WOMEN?

One of the interesting issues in the field of marriage and family life is just how similar or different men and women are. This will be examined in light of biological facts as well as evidence from psychological and cultural studies.

Biological Evidence

HORMONES

Earlier it was pointed out that the presence of testosterone leads to the development of the male genitals. However, both sexes have both female and male hormones, though females have a predominance of the female hormones *estrogen* and *progesterone* and males have more *testosterone*. Though some scholars question their applicability to humans, studies with some animals have shown that increased levels of male hormones are associated with increased aggressive behavior and a higher sex drive.

HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

Typically, males are stronger, taller, and heavier than females. The average male stands five feet, nine inches tall and weighs 162 pounds, while the average female stands five feet, three inches tall and weighs 135 pounds. Males have heavier bones, while females have a higher percentage of body fat. Together with their presumed greater aggressiveness, height and weight differences may contribute to the ability of males to dominate females.

SEX RATIOS

The number of males for each 100 females suggests another difference. Females might well be considered the more durable sex. While more males are actually conceived than females, more of them die before birth and at every age period throughout the life cycle. For example, the sex ratio is 140 at conception, 106 at birth, 95 in young adulthood, and 85 after the age of 65. In addition there are more male infants who are malformed and have heredity defects. Finally, females also appear to have a greater resistance to disease and a higher tolerance of pain.

Clearly, then, the biological evidence shows sex differences between females and males. Some of these differences seem to be to the advantage of females, others to males.

Psychological Evidence

In general, the behavior and personalities of American men and women differ. Men as a rule tend to be more active, aggressive, and achievement-oriented. Women tend to be more people-oriented; that is, they are interested in people and their welfare.

Biology vs. learning is another issue. The differences mentioned above do exist, but it is unclear whether they are a result of biological differences or of learning. Research studies of adult men and women do not provide adequate information, because by adulthood, biology and learning are linked in subtle and complex ways and their distinct effect is not easily assessed. Consequently, studies of infants are seen as a way of resolving this dilemma. Little learning is presumed to have occurred at this age and differences between females and males can be attributed mainly to biology.

Sex differences are clear in studies of infants. For example, though male babies are more active, female babies smile more. However, even in this circumstance the question of whether the difference is due to biology and learning is not easy to answer. Contemporary research on infancy has shown that boy babies and girl babies are handled and treated differently from birth. Boys are treated more roughly (bounced up and down more), and their parents are much more likely to tolerate their restless behavior. Girls are treated more gently and with greater affection. There is little doubt that these differences combine with biological factors to influence subsequent behavior.

In short, there are some differences in behavior and personality between males and females (Basow, 1980). However, it is difficult to disentangle the relative contributions of biology and learning to these differences. Moreover, the differences are relatively insignificant and to many do not seem to justify the social power differences between men and women that exist in society.

Cross-Cultural Evidence

If the different behaviors and talents of men and women are rooted in biology, gender roles should not differ substantially across societies. If, however, there are substantial cross-cultural differences in gender roles, this suggests that culture and learning are more important than biology in explaining them.

ALLOCATION OF SOCIETAL TASKS

Anthropologists have long studied how societal tasks are allocated, and the bases for these assignments. Three general patterns seem evident from this line of research. First, men and women are generally assigned different societal roles in most if not all societies. Second, there is only a handful of tasks that are consistently assigned to one sex rather than the other. Men are generally given tasks requiring substantial physical strength and mobility, such as hunting and fighting; women are more often responsible for child-rearing and care of the home. Third, the majority of societal tasks are not seen as exclusively those of one sex. What might be considered "women's work" in one society may be performed by men in another. For example, in Table 3.1 it is evident that "manufacturing of leather products" is performed "always or usually" by men in thirty-two societies and "always or usually" by women in thirty-five societies.

Research evidence from societies around the world demonstrates some modest consistencies in assigning societal roles on the basis of sex. However, there is also considerable variation in such sex-linked task allocation, demonstrating that culture rather than biology explains these differences.

TYPICAL GENDER ROLES

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the importance of culture is evident in a study by Margaret Mead (1935). In her survey of three societies in New Guinea, she found that in two of them there were few differences between the typical behavior of men and women. Among the Arapesh, both men and women were seen as emotionally warm, cooperative, and unaggressive, behavior generally defined as "feminine" in American society. Among the Mundugumor, however, both men and women were aggressive, selfish, and insensitive to others, the kind of behavior Americans tend to see as "masculine." Interestingly, the third society—the Tchambuli—did show differences between men and women. However, they were the exact opposite of what is considered typical gender behavior in the United States. Women were unemotional, dominant, and wore no ornaments, while men were emotional, gossipy, submissive, and nurturant toward children.

The research of Mead and others demonstrates the considerable variation in what is often taken to be natural differences in the behavior and temperament of men and women. Taken with the evidence from Murdock's investigations, research shows that gender roles are sociological constructions based on other aspects of a society's culture.

Number of Societies in Which:	Men always or usually do it	Either sex may do it	Women always/ usually do it
Task			
Metal working	78	0	0
Weapon making	122	0	0
Pursuit of sea mammals	35	0	0
Hunting	179	0	—
Manufacturing musical instruments	47	0	1
Boat building	95	4	1
Mining and quarrying	36	1	1
Working in wood and bark	122	5	2
Working in stone	71	2	2
Trapping/catching small animals	141	4	3
Lumbering	108	3	7
Working in bone, horn, and shell	71	3	3
Fishing	132	19	7
Manufacturing ceremonial objects	38	13	1
Herding	46	4	5
House building	118	25	17
Clearing of land for agriculture	95	17	18
Net making	50	4	13
Trading	79	20	15
Dairy operations	21	3	14
Manufacturing ornaments	27	40	24
Agriculture: soil preparation and planting	54	33	57
Manufacturing leather products	32	9	35
Body design, e.g., tattooing	30	44	42
Erecting and dismantling of shelter	16	5	28
Hide preparating	33	4	53
Tending of fowl and other small animals	25	8	40
Agriculture: crop tending and harvesting	25	35	83
Gathering of shellfish	13	8	32
Manufacturing nontextile fabrics	14	9	34
Fire making and tending	24	25	84
Burden bearing	18	35	77
Preparing of drinks and narcotics	21	13	65
Manufacturing thread and cordage	25	11	83
Basket making	28	10	88
Mat making	18	6	65

Table 3.1 The Division of Labor by Sex Across Societies. Adapted from Murdock (1937)

Number of Societies in Which: Task	Men always or usually do it	Either sex may do it	Women always/ usually do it
Weaving	21	2	73
Gathering of fruits, berries, and nuts	15	15	76
Fuel gathering	23	10	108
Pottery making	15	6	85
Preserving of meat and fish	10	10	88
Making and repairing clothing	15	8	104
Gathering of herbs, roots, and seeds	9	11	78
Cooking	6	9	186
Water carrying	7	5	126
Grain grinding	6	5	127

Table 3.1 (con't.) The Division of Labor by Sex Across Societies. Adapted from Murdock (1937)

GENDER ROLES

Traditional Conceptions of Gender Roles

What is deemed appropriate behavior for men and women has been deeply embedded in American society for long periods of time.

STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes of Women. Traditionally women have been expected to focus their lives around their home and their children. These gender-role conceptions were supported by *stereotypes* that viewed women as especially caring individuals who were affectionate and sensitive to the needs of others. Further, women have been considered dependent and passive in their social relationships. They were expected to act on the basis of their emotions and generally to conform to societal demands. In light of their gender roles, which directed their concerns to children and home, women were not expected to know about political issues or to be mechanically or athletically adept; they could depend on their husbands for these skills.

Stereotypes of Men. Men traditionally have been responsible for working at a job outside the home to provide the necessities of family life. Consequently their occupational roles were given priority over their family roles. Men have also been the subjects of stereotypes. They were expected to be active and assertive or even aggressive in social relations. They were seen as competent, self-reliant, and as possessing wide-ranging knowledge; this was both a consequence of and a justification for their role as the family's "representative" to society.

Explanations of Traditional Gender Roles

DIFFERENT THEORETICAL VIEWS

The Functionalist View. Since the traditional gender roles are fairly widespread throughout the world, functionalists tend to argue that they must be useful and beneficial in some measure. It is also argued that dividing up the responsibilities in any group or organization generally leads to greater efficiency. Functionalists see the family as just such a group in which the different gender roles reflect an effective and efficient division of necessary family labor.

Early parenting is different for men and women. The specific form of gender roles capitalizes on basic biological sex differences. Since human infants are essentially helpless at birth and for some time thereafter, they need to be nurtured and cared for. Breastfeeding was the sole mode by which infants obtained necessary nourishment until the modern era of formulas and bottles. Functionalists argue that the very process of breastfeeding, which is only possible for women, is the very model of nurturance and care. Moreover, it requires the nursing mother to stay close to home with the infant. Men are not so restricted. They are free to be mobile and to concentrate their efforts on obtaining food and other necessities required by their families. Thus, functionalists argue, it is more efficient to capitalize on these biologically based differences by giving them social definition and support.

Family leadership is played differently for men and women. Specialization of adult family roles is viewed as highly efficient by functionalists. Families need two kinds of leaders: an *instrumental* leader who is responsible for linking the family with the outside world; and an *expressive* leader who focuses attention on the internal needs and relationships within the family (Zelditch, 1955). The previous discussion of biological differences between men and women demonstrates the efficiency of maintaining the initial focus of women on children and the home, and of men on the outside world. It is not absolutely necessary that men be the instrumental leader in the family and women the expressive leader, but it is easier to build on rather than try to reverse the earlier biologically rooted pattern.

Social prestige is attached to these social roles. One of the consequences of this particular link between gender and family roles is a difference in the social prestige accorded to men and women. Typically society places higher value on those performing wide-ranging societal roles and less value on those centering their attention on a more limited social sphere. That is, instrumental roles carry more prestige than expressive roles.

This functionalist view was very popular and generally accepted until fairly recently. With the development of modern conveniences such as formulas and bottles, women are not necessarily tied to nurturing roles, and with improvements in technology household activities need not dominate their lives. In addition, with longer lifespans and fewer children, it is no longer necessary for women to devote themselves exclusively to child raising. The changing social and economic climate has provided opportunities for fashioning more flexible roles for men and women than might have been possible in the past.

The Conflict View. Conflict theorists view the functionalist approach as simply a way of justifying the continued domination of women by men. Whatever the initial basis of the differences in gender roles of men and women and their link to social power, these differences have continued because men—who generally control the situation—have little reason to alter it.

Economic equality affects family roles. Conflict theorists maintain that gender role differences are based on economic inequality between men and women. The traditional roles that men play are viewed as contributing more to the economy of society than those played by women. There is some support for this view from research in different societies. In societies in which the economic contributions of men and women are viewed as relatively equivalent, there appears to be considerably less gender inequality. Even in the United States, Blood and Wolfe (1960) demonstrated that women's power in the family was related to their economic contribution; women who worked full-time indicated that they had more power in the family than those who worked part time. These, in turn, reported more power than those who did not work at all.

The sharp differences that have existed between functionalist and conflict theories on this issue have moderated somewhat over the past few years. Conflict theorists have come to accept the idea that the traditional division of labor between men and women may have been functional at an earlier historical time. And a growing number of functional theorists have come to grips with the empirical evidence that traditional gender role distinctions are no longer as functional as they may have been in the past.

Continuities and Changes in Gender Roles

There is little doubt that contemporary gender roles are more flexible in most societies, especially the United States, than they were in the past. More women work, attend college, and enter politics today than in any other time in American history. Increasingly, workplaces have taken these changes into account; more now provide or support child care provisions and parental leaves for childbirth.

DIFFERENT SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF CHANGE

In the Workplace. In 1920 only about 20 percent of American women worked outside of the home. By 1985 more than half had outside employment; about three-quarters of these women worked full-time. Two-thirds of married women with school-aged children and a little over half with preschoolers are working outside the home. As expected, an even higher number of divorced women with children are in the labor force.

Despite the increasing number of women with jobs, there is still a considerable difference in the type of work men and women do. Women are much more frequently found in clerical, sales, and service jobs. Men are more likely to occupy professional and managerial positions or to be in the skilled trades. Even in traditional women's fields such as education, women are less likely to hold higher-status positions such as senior administrators.

Thus, though gender role distinctions in the occupational world have been reduced, there is still substantial sex segregation of occupations. Moreover, though this discrepancy has been decreasing, women on the average earn less than two-thirds of the income of men in comparable jobs.

In Higher Education. At one time colleges and universities were almost the exclusive province of men. This is no longer true. In fact, more women than men currently attend institutions of higher education as both undergraduates and graduates. However, while more women earn a master's degree, men are more likely to earn the Ph.D., which is required for many high-level professional careers. This, too, is changing as women increasingly enter these more prestigious programs.

Even within these institutions of higher education, some forms of sex segregation still occur. Women, for example, are more likely to work toward degrees in the humanities and the social sciences while men pursue training in science and engineering. These and other differences in curriculum objectives often stem from earlier differences in the socialization of men and women, and from guidance they receive from school advisers.

In Household and Child Care Responsibilities. In a growing number of families, husbands and wives are sharing domestic and childrearing duties. Despite this pattern, the home is still seen by many men and women as primarily the responsibility of women. When husbands do share family tasks, they usually tend to finances, lawn care, the family car, and general repair. Cooking and cleaning are still seen by many as "women's work," while mowing a lawn and assembling a new barbecue are typically viewed as "men's work." Thus the increased sharing of family responsibilities is not always equal. Typically the working wife is still responsible for the cooking, housework, and child care. In a recent book, Hochschild (1989) has termed this the working wife's "second shift."

However, there is considerable evidence that a major social change is occurring in conceptions of appropriate gender roles in the family. More men are truly sharing family tasks, and the transmission of these new attitudes through socialization is likely to increase their number substantially in future generations.

In Politics. One of the explanations of the traditional division of gender roles stressed its importance in keeping women out of the arena of societal decision making. The contemporary scene in the United States shows both how far this situation has changed and how much more is required to accomplish gender equality.

Women only attained the right to vote in the United States in 1920. Since then, however, few women have held major elective or appointive positions of power in the political sphere. Substantial changes have taken place over the past few decades, however, and increasingly women are attaining positions of political authority—though more often at the local than national level. There are growing numbers of women mayors and governors. More women serve in the United States Congress than previously, and a woman, Geraldine Ferraro, ran for the position of vice-president of the United States.

Despite the increase in women's political power, there were still in the summer of 1992 only two women in the United States Senate and too few in the House of Representatives to be able to get many "women's issues" on the national agenda and then translated into effective legislation. Increased attention to women's concerns is evident at all levels of government. However, as the recent hearings over the confirmation of Clarence Thomas to the United States Supreme Court demonstrated, men still hold most of the reins of societal power and their conceptions dominate the political process.

Gender Role Socialization

Gender roles are learned through *socialization*, the lifelong process through which a person becomes an adequately functioning and contributing member of a particular society. There are four major social contexts in which socialization occurs, particularly for gender roles.

SOCIALIZATION CONTEXTS

In the Family. Boys and girls are treated—and are expected to behave—differently from birth. Traditionally, boys are expected to be independent and active beings. Girls are taught to be more dependent, gentle, and caring. Some of these characteristics are taught directly through the different ways boys and girls are treated by their family. Boys are handled much more roughly than girls even from birth and are expected to strike out on their own earlier and more completely than girls. Appropriate gender role behavior is also learned indirectly in the family as children notice the behavior of their parents.

In the School. Recently, as a result of considerable social pressure from women's groups, publishers have begun to change the ways in which boys and girls are portrayed in textbooks. Earlier stories and illustrations showed boys involved in active pursuits and playing with cars, trucks, and soldiers; girls were often more passive and seen playing with dolls and clothes. Similar traditional gender roles were assigned to adults. Men/fathers/husbands were often at work, while women/mothers/wives were at home. Less traditional gender role stereotypes are currently found in school textbooks.

Curricular choices in high schools have also changed. Previously boys took classes in science, mathematics, and shop; girls were enrolled in home economics and literature courses. Once again, concerted social pressure has led to a greater flexibility of curricula and choices that are less gender-linked than in the past.

In the Peer Group. Few doubt the power of peer groups to shape a person's behavior. This is certainly true of gender role activities. Traditionally the activities of boys' peer groups were significantly different from those of girl's. In the preteen and early teen years, boys were involved in team activities that have clearly defined rules and in which competition is quite common. Girls at this age were involved in smaller peer groups and in more spontaneous, less organized activities with few or no clear rules (e.g., talking, exchanging clothing, jumping rope). Though the differences in boys' and girls' peer group activities tend to decrease as children get older, they reinforce at least initially the gender role differences that are often part of the home and school environment. However, the contemporary trend for girls to be involved in organized athletics will expose them to many of the same team activities and rule systems common for boys.

In the Mass Media. The mass media—films, books, magazines, music, and especially television—have a decided influence in defining appropriate gender roles. Historically, traditional conceptions of gender roles have been central to the mass media. Until recently men were usually portrayed on television and in the movies as skilled lawyers, brilliant scientists, fearless detectives or policemen, expert physicians or successful businessmen. They were competent and in command of every situation (except at home, where they often couldn't handle simple tasks like cooking dinner for Junior when mother was in the hospital). Women were generally seen as decorative pieces. They were attractive but dependent on men, and most often seen in the setting of the home engaged in domestic duties. Goffman's research (1976) demonstrated the role of gender-based advertising in the print media in fostering and maintaining these traditional conceptions.

The past decade has witnessed a decided shift. More women are now portrayed in the media as active and dynamic figures, rather than passive, attractive bystanders. They are seen as physicians, lawyers, police officers, and news reporters. Clearly, these are roles of wider scope, more social prestige, and exhibiting more power and influence than was the case previously.

GENDER ROLES AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Traditional gender roles have implications for the process of establishing and maintaining intimate relationships. We shall examine several different areas of intimate relationships and how they are influenced by gender roles.

Communication Patterns

Men and women differ in the manner in which they communicate, both verbally and nonverbally. As "active" people, men interrupt verbal communications more and speak louder and less fluently than women; they are not as good as women at "reading" gestures and subtle difference in voice tones. Women, though they talk much less in mixed company, tend to be more expressive; they use more facial gestures and smile more frequently in the course of conversation. They also use a wider range of pitch and intonations in their speech patterns.

Emotional Expression

Women are generally more emotionally expressive than men. From childhood, boys are generally taught to withhold their emotions ("Boys don't cry."), while girls are taught the opposite ("It's not good to hold your feelings in."). However, men are more likely to express anger than women (Brody, 1985); this may be a result of the general power differences between the sexes. As adults women are expected to do more of the *emotion work*, managing the expression of emotions (Hochschild, 1979, 1983) in intimate relationships.

Love and Romance

Contrary to popular belief, men are at least as romantic as women. They are somewhat more likely than women to believe that "love lasts forever" and that "love can overcome all obstacles." This view fits the active nature of the masculine role. Women are more pragmatic than is generally believed. They more readily accept the view that in ongoing relationships people may see facets of their partners that are less than desirable and that economic security counts just as much as chemistry in intimate relationships. To some extent this reflects the passive and dependent nature of the traditional feminine role.

While both men and women report loving their partners, women are more likely to reveal a range of emotional responses. They report feeling giddy, carefree, as if they were floating on a cloud, and report more difficulty in concentrating (Kanin, Davidson, and Scheck, 1970). The same study found that men report falling in love more quickly than women. In both cases traditional gender distinctions between the emotional woman and the active and defining man can be used to explain these findings.

Self-Disclosure

Adolescent girls are more open about themselves in both same- and opposite-sex intimate relationships than are boys. Moreover, girls are more likely to expect their partners to share their thoughts and feelings. In short, adolescent girls prefer self-disclosure on their part and their partners' part more than do boys.

More recently, emphasis on equality and reciprocity in relationships have tended to reduce gender differences in the actual amount of self-disclosure among college couples. However, there is still variation between men and women in what they disclose about themselves. For example, men are much more likely to disclose their good qualities and hold back revealing undesirable characteristics.

Conceptions of Intimate Relationships

Both men and women see intimate relationships as important and as a route to achieve personal happiness and fulfillment. However, they tend to view the relationships somewhat differently. Men tend to have a more traditional view of what is proper gender role behavior. They think men should take the lead and women should be more passive, for example. As indicated above, women prefer more self-disclosure in intimate relationships. And among the college-educated, women are more likely to maintain independent friendships and career interests outside their intimate relationship.

The characteristics sought by men and women in an ideal intimate partner also differ. Men seek women who are good-looking and sexually attractive. Women prefer men who are smart, mature, and successful. These differences are in part traceable to the gender role differences that stem from socialization.

Decision Making and Interaction Processes

There are relationships in which both men and women share equally in making necessary decisions. However, in relationships that are not characterized by equality in decision making, it is more often the man who dominates this process. Another pattern of decision making involves separate spheres of power for men and women. When this occurs, it tends to follow traditional gender role lines. Among traditional married couples the husband is the primary decision maker in areas such as what car to buy, where the family will live, and what kind and amount of insurance to get. The wife has primary decision-making authority within the home; decorating and furnishing the home and choice and preparation of meals are examples. In dating couples of this type, the man may take primacy in deciding the appropriate entertainment or recreational activities, while the woman is generally more likely to choose the level of sexual intimacy that will be permitted. Contemporary emphasis on gender equality has tended to reduce though not eliminate these differences.

Interaction processes in intimate relationships also seem to differ along gender lines. A women is more likely to see her partner as competent to make key decisions and thus defer to his expertise. This is less true of men. Women are more likely to try to achieve consensus in decision making by indicating the partners' common interests rather than relying on expertise. Given the traditional power differences between men and women, men are more likely to use direct action in decision-making situations, while women often tend to be more indirect. They try to get men to see their point of view rather than just asserting it, as men are more likely to do.

REDUCING GENDER ROLE BARRIERS

Traditional gender role barriers often impede men and women by introducing rigidity that limits the matching of personal interests and skills with social roles. Fluid gender roles are likely to permit greater flexibility for both partners.

Large -Scale Social Action

The rise of *feminism*, a social movement organized to eliminate sexism toward women, has heightened general social awareness of the need for more flexible gender roles. In addition, it has become clear that restrictive gender roles have tended to restrict educational and occupational opportunities for women, thus increasing the barriers between them and men. The disadvantages of this to society as well as to the individual women involved has been a major message of feminists.

The passing and enforcement of equal-opportunity laws and executive orders have similarly reduced barriers between the gender roles of men and women. This approach has focused on rooting out *institutional sexism*, practices that have the effect of putting women at a disadvantage, whether or not they were intended to do so, as well as the more direct and personal type of sex discrimination.

Interpersonal Action

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Often, partners in intimate relationships accept the gender roles assigned to them unwillingly, without expressing their unhappiness about the rigidities they impose. More open communication between partners, especially at early stages in the formation of intimate relationships, can serve to clarify gender role conceptions and allow more flexibility and choice.

EMPATHY

Rigid barriers often limit *empathy*, the ability to view the world through the eyes of another. By being empathic, individuals become more capable of understanding how their partners view the advantages and disadvantages of the other's gender roles. They are able to stand back and examine how their behavior affects their partner; this is a necessary step to being more flexible and reducing rigid gender role barriers.

COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

Neither open communication nor empathy will reduce gender role barriers unless the two people are committed to equality in their relationship. Equality does not mean that each has to be doing the same thing at all times. It does refer to the *process* of the couple's relationship, their ability to express their needs to each other, to have these needs understood, and to agree to try make the changes necessary in themselves and in the relationship to accommodate these needs.

Sex is a biological concept based on differences in the chromosomal patterns that lead to the development of different primary and secondary sex characteristics of females and males. These characteristics are common to all members of the human species. Gender, on the other hand, is a social concept that differs across societies.

Biologically, men are generally taller, heavier, and more aggressive, though women appear to have greater resistance to disease and to be able to tolerate more pain. There are also psychological differences between men's and women's personality and temperament. Evidence from the study of other societies makes it clear that there are few social roles that are universally assigned to one sex or the other, suggesting that biological sex characteristics are unlikely to explain gender roles.

Traditional conceptions of gender roles locate the woman in the home and the man outside of it. Functionalists have viewed the division of gender responsibilities premised on basic biological differences to be a useful and efficient way of allocating necessary societal tasks. Conflict theorists see traditional gender roles as based on economic inequality, a means by which men maintain their dominant position in society. Contemporary gender roles are similar in some ways with more traditional roles, and different in others. That is true in the workplace, in institutions of higher education, in the home, and in the political sphere.

Gender roles are learned through the process of socialization. Starting with the family and continuing in school, boys and girls are treated differently, and different behaviors are expected and tolerated from them. Peer group activities have had the same effect, as have the portrayal of men and women in the mass media.

Gender roles play a significant part in the process of forming and maintaining intimate relationships. Men and women differ in their patterns of communicating and in their emotional expressiveness. Men take a more *traditional and less flexible view of gender roles than do women; this is especially true for college-educated women. Decisions in intimate relationships are more often dominated by men. Moreover, women are more likely to try to achieve agreement about issues in intimate relationships by pointing out common interests. Men tend to try to resolve differences by presumed expertise rather than by consensus.*

Traditional gender role barriers reduce flexibility for both men and women, and have been attacked by the feminist movement and by affirmative action laws. On the interpersonal level, these barriers become more fluid through open communication among partners and their willingness to be empathic. Underlining all of these mechanisms must be a commitment to equality and to a process of negotiating an acceptable role for each partner.

4

Intimacy and Love

This chapter focuses on the nature of intimate relationships and the sentiment of love. It describes the components of intimate relationships, and also compares love with other forms of intimate association and discusses some key theories of love. Finally, the various "styles" of loving are presented, and the role of love in American culture is explored.

INTIMACY

Relationships

Being connected to others is part of the human condition. People are born of and into relationships, and similar connections are made throughout life. Some of these relationships are relatively impersonal and do not involve many aspects of a person's life. These are called *secondary relationships*; they are often formal, impersonal, and of relatively short duration. A temporary work group is an example of a secondary relationship. On the other hand, *primary relationships* are more involving, generally longer lasting, and incorporate a wide range of the participants' identities and activities. Families and friends are examples of primary relationships.

One important distinction separates the two types of relationships. Primary relationships are marked by an emphasis on *intimacy*, the "experiencing of the essence of one's self in intense intellectual, physical, and/or emotional communion with another human being" (Kieffer, 1977: 267). Secondary relationships require a less intense involvement.

The Essence of Intimacy

Intimacy implies a sense of trust and closeness to another person. It involves easy communication and a sense of security. For many people, intimacy suggests maturity and a strong emotional bond. A sexual relationship is often part of intimacy.

Marriage and Intimacy

Marriage is considered a prime example of an intimate relationship. In the United States, as in all societies practicing conjugal courtship (see chapter 2), intimacy is in many ways the defining feature of marriage. In her discussion of intimacy, Kieffer (1977:281) argues that while "marriage is no guarantee of year-round or round-the-clock intimacy . . . it provides for a major share of the emotional needs of millions of individuals. . . . No other living arrangement yet devised has provided so well for so many personal needs and desires of so many individuals, males and females."

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

The Nature and Importance of Intimate Relationships

Psychologists have long asserted that humans have a need to experience intimacy in association with others. For many people intimacy is the central feature of everyday life, and its absence may create severe psychological difficulties. Kieffer (1977:271–277) uses a set of dimensions (breadth, openness, and depth) developed by Biddle (1976) for analyzing roles to explore the nature of intimate relationships.

DIMENSIONS OF INTIMACY

Breadth. This dimension describes the range of activities in which partners are jointly involved. In broad intimate relationships the couple spends a great deal of time in common activities. In narrow relationships the range of common activities is more restricted. Functioning intimate relationships need to have a minimal breadth if they are to permit the necessary level of openness and depth.

Openness. An open relationship is one in which the partners are willing to disclose their feelings and innermost thoughts to each other. In satisfying intimate relationships this mutual self-disclosure is an ongoing process, not a one-time activity. As it proceeds it often increases the bonds between partners. Increasing openness has a negative side as well. It makes each person vulnerable to the other, risking rejection or betrayal as a consequence of the revealed information. Mutual openness is a modest safeguard.

Depth. Intimate relationships not only involve a range of shared activities and a willingness to open up one's heart and head to the other, but also involve central aspects of identity. Kieffer (1977:275) indicates that this dimension can be described as "a going beyond the self in the process of intimate fusion with another person." A focus on depth is an indication of the level of commitment of the partners to each other. The deeper the intimacy, the greater two people are united in the relationship.

Components of Intimate Relationships

Intimate relationships involve a number of qualities (Chelune, Robinson, and Kommor, 1984). These components contribute to the development and maintenance of intimate relationships.

KNOWLEDGE

As a result of openness, partners acquire increasing information about each other. They know each other's likes and dislikes, their hopes and fears. This shared knowledge often marks the relationship as different from more casual ones in which the partners are also involved.

MUTUALITY

Mutuality is at the core of an intimate relationship. This component does not require the two partners to be identical. Indeed, what they share with each other is often reciprocal; the sharing by one partner of feelings about a particular topic may lead the other partner to share feelings about a different concern. Mutuality provides a sense of equality in the relationship, with each partner contributing and neither being left out.

INTERDEPENDENCE

As partners share intimacies, their feelings, thoughts, and ideas—their very lives—become intertwined. Their sharing binds them to each other as may the pooling of their views, resources, and feelings. This interdependence results in considerable mutual power. Because partners depend on each other, each has some measure of power over the other.

TRUST

The vulnerability that self-disclosure brings is less of a problem when there is trust in a relationship. Trust requires partners to have confidence in each other's essential integrity, honesty, and fairness. Without this sense of trust, openness and interdependence are unlikely.

COMMITMENT

To be committed to a relationship is to be bound to it both intellectually and emotionally. This implies that the relationship is central to a person's identity. Successful relationships involve mutual commitment. Waller and Hill (1951:190–192) point out the difficulties of nonmutual commitment with their "*principle of least interest.*" Under this condition, when one partner is substantially more committed than the other, the less committed partner tends to dominate the relationship and may exploit it for his or her own benefit.

CARING

Though intimate relationships may form for a variety of reasons, caring will always be among them. A strong sense of affection and caring between partners is an essential element of an intimate relationship. Caring, Turner and Helms (1988:79–80) maintain, involves "giving the utmost" to a partner in need and being a "champion or advocate" for the partner's interests.

LOVE

Love is central to intimate relationships. It is one of the most complicated and sought after, though probably least understood, of human emotions. It is often the focus of people's lives, especially the young, and it is at the core of most movies, plays, novels, poems, songs, and television programs.

Love as an Emotional Bond

The word *love* is used for many things. People love their parents, their children, their pets, their boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, freedom, independence, an ice-cream sundae, and many other things. Despite the wide differences among these objects of love, there is a common theme—a warm and affectionate bond between the person and the object. People feel connected to things they love, and that link brings them some measure of joy and happiness. The form of love this chapter will consider is *romantic love*, a strong attraction with sexual overtones between two people.

Variations in Styles of Loving

Romantic love takes various forms. The ancient Greeks did not have a single word for love. They saw different styles of love and used different terms for each.

STYLES OF LOVE

Eros. This style refers to intense emotional feelings (passion) between two partners and involves the desire for sexual (erotic) intimacy. Pleasing the partner is a strong component of this style of love. It is the closest to our contemporary view of romantic love.

Storge. This style (pronounced "stor-gay") refers to a strong bond of affection and companionship. It is a style of love in which two people enjoy each other's company and are pleased to engage in common, shared activities. It involves a more relaxed, less intense or passionate emotional bond.

Agape. This is a form of self-sacrificing love. The partners care deeply about each other's welfare, but in a gentle and low-key way. This form of love is other-directed and seeks little in return; the happiness of the other is the primary concern.

Pragma. Linked to the word *pragmatic*, this style of love is sensible and realistic. It is not characterized by blinding passion that may distort a person's vision of the other. Pragma love suggests the choice of a partner who is compatible, one whose background and general views are similar.

Ludus. This style is more "loose" and playful than the others. Love is more a game than a long-term commitment. Ludic lovers are somewhat self-centered and sexual permissiveness is part of this style.

Mania. This is an intense and almost obsessive form of love. Thoughts of the other dominate a person in the grip of mania and often produce a constant state of anxiety about the relationship. This anxiety often leads to the continual need to be reassured of the partner's love.

Love and Other Types of Intimate Relationships

There are a number of intimate relationships other than love. Some are seen as positive and desirable, others as negative and even destructive.

LUST

Lust is often distinguished from love on two grounds. First, it is overwhelmingly concerned with sexual pleasure, while love is a more comprehensive and fully rounded emotion. Affection, commitment, and trust are not necessary for lust, but they are for love. Second, the focus of lust is on the individual's satisfaction; the partner's needs are irrelevant. Satisfying the erotic desires of the lusting person is primary. With love the partner's needs, desires, and welfare also count. In short, lust is a unidimensional and one-sided relationship, whereas love is multidimensional and is concerned with both partners.

INFATUATION

Infatuation is less valued than love, although both can seem identical in their early stages. Whether a person is infatuated with or in love with another, the relationship engenders strong positive feelings of pleasure and excitement. The difference is that infatuation is often based on a less realistic perception of the other's character or of the possibility of establishing such an intimate relationship. With infatuation, the attraction is based on an idealized version of the other. Rubin (1983) argues that this fantasy image is the projection of people's idealized view of self or of key people in their past. Whether or not one accepts this psychodynamic view, it is clear that infatuation is based less on a realistic assessment of the potential partner and more on what the infatuated person would like the other to be.

Love vs. Infatuation. In the early stages of a relationship it may be difficult to distinguish love from infatuation. The feelings are similar and there is a measure of idealization of the other that takes place in both. Over the course of a relationship people learn more about each other. This increased knowledge makes it easier to separate the realistic from the idealized elements of the other person (Bessell, 1984). This greater knowledge of the partner helps separate a "crush" from love.

Impossible Relationships. Many young people today, for example, are infatuated with rock music stars, as earlier generations "mooned" over Clark Gable or Frank Sinatra. The strong feelings many have for these media celebrities can be described as infatuations. Young people think and dream about celebrities, wish to be with them and share their lives. It is the unrealistic nature of any possible relationship rather than the emotional content that distinguishes this form of infatuation from love.

The Weakness of Infatuation. The term "infatuation" has a slight negative connotation; it is seen as less desirable than love. It is almost always used in conjunction with one of three adverbs—one is "just" infatuated, "merely" infatuated, or "only" infatuated. These terms serve to weaken the importance of the relationship. Similarly, a person may use the same terminology to highlight the difference between a former relationship ("That was merely an infatuation.") in favor of a current one ("This is love!"). The distinguishing feature of infatuation is that it is based on a fantasy image; it fades when reality intrudes upon the relationship. Love, conversely, becomes stronger as more is learned about the loved one. Time and knowledge of the other are the enemies of infatuation and the friends of love.

JEALOUSY

Jealousy, a commonly experienced emotion, occurs when a person loses or fears losing something of value, such as the attention of the loved one. Jealousy is most obvious when an intimate relationship is broken and the partner's affection is reattached to another person.

Grief and Envy. Both are related to jealousy. People grieve when they lose something they do not expect to be able to gain. Envy results from a person's desire to have something possessed by another.

Jealousy and Love. The link between the two is recorded at least as far back as the twelfth century. Capellanus (1959: original 1184) attempted to codify the rules of *courtly love*, the view of romantic love that evolved in the courts of Europe. His second rule was that "He who is not jealous cannot love." This view would be accepted by many people today, though in extreme form jealousy is seen as psychologically disabling. Perhaps the most common and dramatic example of extreme jealousy is portrayed in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Othello's compulsive jealousy of his wife, Desdemona, was used by his "trusted" aide, Iago, to destroy him.

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Jealous Behavior. Jealousy may take many forms. It can be expressed openly by direct confrontation of the partner or by long periods of silence and cold, distant behavior. Whatever form it takes, jealousy often threatens the rapport upon which intimate relationships are based.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship and Liking. While lust, infatuation, and jealousy are not seen as desirable forms of intimate relationships in American society, friendship is. Most people have a number of friendships that they value highly over time.

Friendship and Love. In many ways friendship and love are similar. In one of the earliest systematic analyses of liking and loving, Rubin (1973) found that both involve respect, attraction, affection, need, care, trust, and tolerance. In another important and more recent study, Davis (1985) comes to a similar conclusion. He points out that both friends and those in love enjoy being with each other and accept each other for themselves. They also trust and respect each other and can count on each other's support and assistance in difficult times. Friends and lovers feel quite comfortable in confiding in each other and generally understand each other more than do strangers or casual acquaintances. Finally, they feel more at home with each other and are likely to be spontaneous and less inhibited.

Friendship vs. Love. These are not the same. Davis (1973) argues that love involves needing the other person in the sense that his or her presence produces feelings of warmth and security. Those in love care for each other and wish to help and protect each other. They trust each other and are extremely tolerant of each other's failings and shortcomings. Davis adds that not only caring is involved in love, but also passion. Passion includes a fascination or preoccupation with the other, a feeling of exclusiveness, or a priority of this relationship over all others, and a measure of sexual desire. Though both caring and passion are useful in distinguishing the difference between love and friendship, in Davis's research passion is more important.

One interesting finding in Davis's study is that friendships are seen as more stable than love relationships. Presumably the respondents believe the factors that bind friends are stronger than those that bind lovers; precisely why, however, is not clear.

Some Contemporary Theories of Romantic Love

Love has long been of interest to writers, poets, philosophers, and social scientists, as well as to most ordinary people. Consequently there are many theories of the nature of romantic love. Four of them are discussed here. The views of Freud and Waller take a somewhat static approach to romantic love; they see it as an object to be analyzed into its component parts. Reiss, on the other hand, sees love as a dynamic process; Berscheid and Walster's theory serves as a transition from the first two to that of Reiss.

LOVE AS AIM-INHIBITED SEX

Sigmund Freud, the founder of the field of psychoanalysis, has centered attention on the sexual underpinnings of romantic love. He believed that all human beings have a biologically based sexual drive that requires satisfaction in some form. This sex drive gets focused on some "love object." The lack of fulfillment or incomplete fulfillment of this drive leads to a heightened intensity of emotion surrounding the love object and an increase in the degree to which the other dominates the person's thoughts. The consequences of an inadequate resolution of the sex drive are often characterized as the feelings associated with romantic love. In short it is the emotional power of unfulfilled sex that is at the base of romantic love.

LOVE AS A SENTIMENT

Waller and Hill (1951) treat love as a *sentiment*, which Gordon (1981: 563) defines in a way that is generally consistent with their approach—"a combination of bodily sensations, gestures, and cultural meanings that we learn in enduring social relationships." Waller and Hill see love as having four components.

Sex. The sex drive provides the energy, the "powerful driving force" behind the sentiment of love. Generally accepting Freud's psychodynamic view, Waller and Hill (1951:111) argue that "without the sexual element, the process of *falling in love* could not occur." However, they point out that sex provides the necessary energy but not the *direction* that love will take; the other three components guide the feelings stirred up by sexual energy.

Pride. One of the factors that help distinguish suitable from unsuitable objects of a person's love is "pride." People's sense of their identity and esteem directs them to love partners who are both socially acceptable and personally compatible. This focus involves the respect people wish to attain from others who are important to them—their "significant others." In fact Waller and Hill (1951: 112) use this criterion to distinguish between love and infatuation. Love, they argue, "*is the sentiment which one feels toward a socially acceptable person.*"

Security. This third component of the sentiment of love involves a feeling of safety and comfort in a relationship with a particular person. The more secure an individual feels in the company of the other person, the less he or she holds back from that other and the more intimate the relationship is likely to be. To love a particular person, then, means that the other makes the individual feel safe and secure.

Economic Motivation. Waller and Hill examined this sentiment of love in the context of the steps leading to marriage. This component refers to the importance of the other person being perceived as someone who can complement the individual in the various activities and responsibilities required of couples in American society. Instead of economic motivation, it might accurately be termed a "division of labor," the fitting together of the two people in ways that allow them to accomplish their individual and common goals.

THE TWO-FACTOR THEORY OF LOVE

Berscheid and Walster (1974) draw upon Schacter and Singer's (1962) research on general emotional states to develop a more dynamic theory of romantic love than the views described above. They argue that there are two stages through which romantic or passionate love is generated.

Arousal. The individual must be emotionally aroused with resulting physiological symptoms. The heart beats faster, the palms begin to sweat, and there may be dizziness or light-headedness. However, many different emotions can provoke these and similar physiological responses, including fear and anger.

Interpretation. The interpretation of these physiological symptoms is the second and more significant part of this theory; the symptoms need to be seen as deriving from feelings of love. Berscheid and Walster suggest that labeling these physiological reactions as love is key. Both positive as well as negative experiences may generate physiological arousal, which can then be interpreted as feelings of love. The smile and affection of a loved one can increase these feelings, but rejection has a similar capacity to heighten them; it is the interpretation that makes the difference.

This theory provides at least a partial explanation of why feelings of jealousy and even anger can sometimes lead to strong feelings of love. The heightened emotions evoked can be subsequently interpreted as deriving from feelings of love. The originating emotion is superseded by the interpretation of the physiological responses as love.

THE WHEEL THEORY OF LOVE

Reiss's approach to the phenomenon of love is even more dynamic than that of Berscheid and Walster. He sees love as a *process* rather than an entity, and focuses on the course of falling in love. The Reiss model (1960) is called the *wheel theory of love* and points to four stages or spokes in the process (see Fig. 4.1).

Rapport. Feeling comfortable and secure with the other is the initiating stage of falling in love. This leads to partners being relaxed and at ease with each other. They seem to understand each other and find it easy to communicate. Reiss argues that similarity of social background, personal experiences, and basic values increases the probability of establishing rapport between two people. It is this rapport that allows the next stage to occur.

Self-Revelation. The second stage occurs only after two people are at ease in each other's presence, when they trust and feel comfortable with the other. In this situation people are more likely to disclose aspects of them-

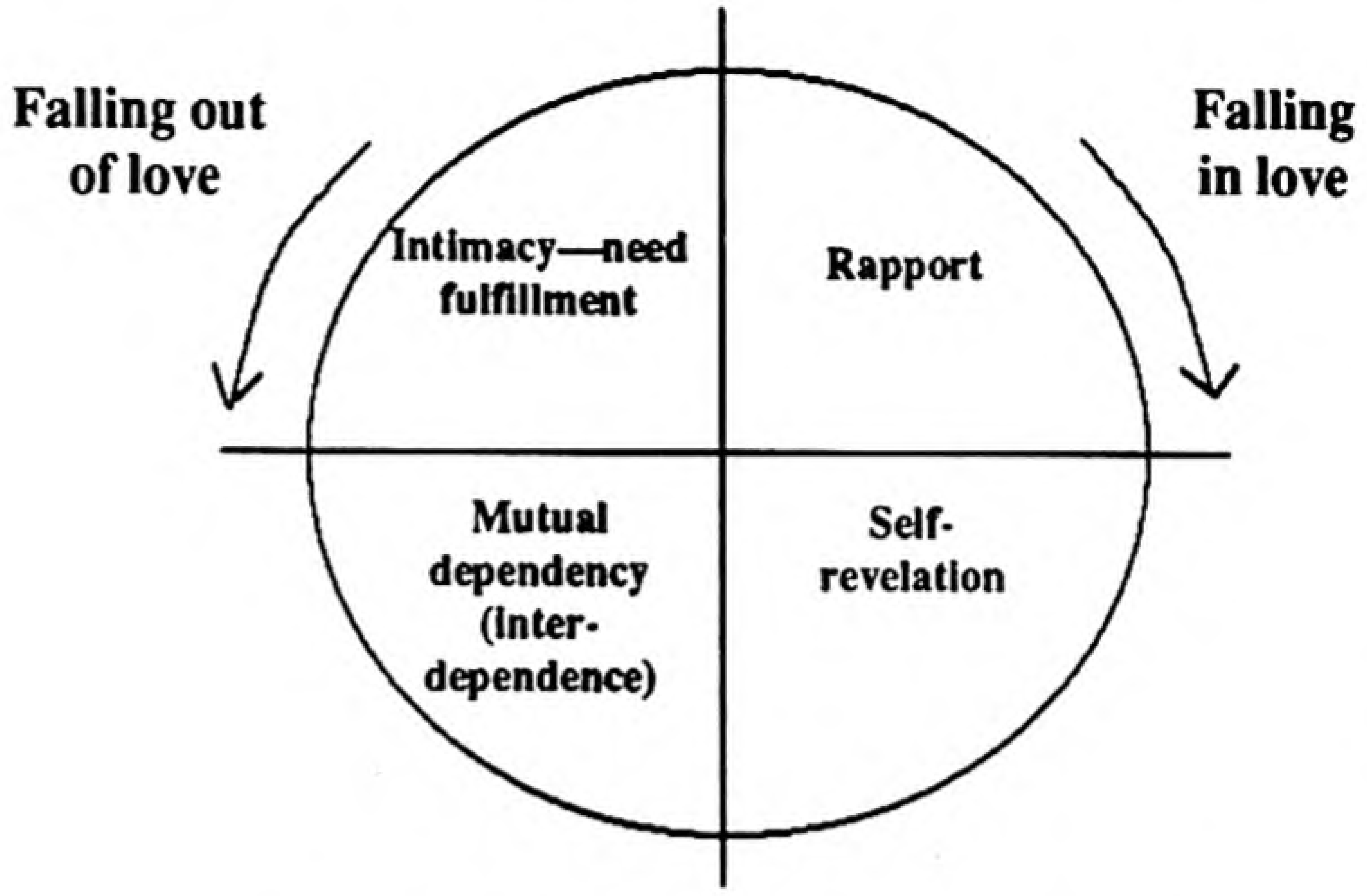
Falling out of love
Falling in love
Intimacy—need fulfillment
Rapport
Mutual dependency (Inter-dependence)
Self-revelation

Fig. 4.1 Reiss's "Wheel Theory of Love"

selves that are not usually available to the world at large. The significance of self-disclosure is that it often serves as a critical bond between two people. They share things with each other that they do not share with anybody else. This bond distinguishes the new relationship from others in which the two may be involved. All people have successive layers of information that are private. The more intimate the relationship, the more of these layers are shared with the partner.

Mutual Dependency (Interdependence). Interdependence arises from the sharing of private information between partners. Each knows more about the partner than most others do, and this knowledge increases their interdependence. Further, partners develop habits of acting together; they come to count on each other and to depend on each other to carry out their characteristic activities. Partners become the audience for each other's stories, jokes, hopes, and fears; their lives become intertwined and interdependent. As a consequence of interdependence some people may feel uncomfortable in the absence of their partner; they desire the physical presence of the other, whether it involves going out or simply watching television at home.

Intimacy—Need Fulfillment. The fourth and final stage of falling in love derives in part from the interdependence that has developed. Reiss points to the importance of the need for intimacy—closeness, sympathetic understanding, and emotional support—in people and how the developing love relationship helps fulfill this and other relevant personality needs.

People feel closer and more intimate with those who satisfy their needs. Consequently rapport between two people deepens and they disclose even more private aspects of themselves. This binds them into closer interdependence and leads to greater need fulfillment. In this manner Reiss describes how love is strengthened. What begins as a pleasant and comfortable relationship can, through the continual "turning of the wheel," progressively ripen into romantic love.

Another facet of Reiss's theory of love is its ability to explain the process of falling *out* of love. In falling out of love, the "wheel" turns in reverse. From any initial point people's actions can weaken a love relationship. For example, if someone's personality needs are not being met then there is less likelihood that person will feel interdependent with the other. Under these conditions a person is more likely to hold back rather than reveal intimate and private thoughts to the other. This restraint is likely to damage the rapport between the two people. Thus the "wheel" can continue to turn in reverse and unravel the intimate relationship built up earlier.

The ability of the wheel theory to explain both falling in and out of love makes it a very powerful analytic tool. Moreover, it seems to be equally applicable to friendship as it is to love. In fact, that has been a mild criticism of this view: Nowhere is there evidence that it applies solely to love rather than to a variety of forms of intimate or close relationships.

Love and American Culture

Love plays a central role in American society. Americans expect it to be the basis of marriage. Love in America is one leg of a stool that also involves sex, marriage, and parenthood—each of which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Moreover, it is romantic love that is at the heart of this view, where it takes on the character of an *ideology*, an interrelated set of beliefs that justify particular forms of behavior. Love is seen as "overcoming all obstacles" and "lasting forever" (Sprecher and Metts, 1989).

In American society love is prominent in the mass media of television, movies, novels, magazines, and music. These agents of socialization teach people the importance of love, the emotions a person in love is expected to feel, and the proper behavior of someone in love. Moreover, the media often portray the image of a culturally desirable "love object," usually men and women at the upper ranges of attractiveness: beautiful women and handsome men. This portrayal leads to a degree of unhappiness in some people who feel less attractive than the models portrayed.

In short, life in American society prepares people to expect love in intimate relationships and teaches them to feel and behave appropriately. Far from being natural, love is one of the many things people learn in and from their society.

Intimacy distinguishes primary from secondary relationships by entwining the partners in intense communion with each other. It involves breadth, openness, and depth. The quality of an intimate relationship depends on the knowledge partners have of each other, their ability to share their thoughts and feelings, and their interdependence, trust, commitment, and caring.

Love is central to intimate relationships. Romantic love involves a strong emotional bond between partners. There are various styles of loving that range from the erotic to the pragmatic. Love is distinguished from other forms of intimate relationships such as lust by its mutuality of concern, and from infatuation by its closer connection to the reality of the other. Losing a loved one to another may result in feelings of jealousy, and the fear of such a loss can threaten the rapport upon which intimate relationships depend. Friendship and liking are less intense than love and lack the passionate and caring elements that define romantic love.

A number of theories have been developed by social scientists to try to understand the nature of romantic love. Freud saw it as aim-inhibited sex, while Waller viewed it as a sentiment whose stirred-up emotions were culturally directed toward socially acceptable and personally compatible targets. Berscheid and Walster pointed to the importance of the interpretation as well as the arousal of emotions in love. And Reiss provided the most dynamic view of love (the "wheel theory") as an ongoing process of establishing rapport, engaging in self-disclosure, becoming interdependent, and meeting each other's personality needs. Similarly the wheel can turn in reverse and explain the process of falling out of love.

Finally, love is clearly central to American society, where it is considered the key basis for marriage. Cultural exposure, especially through the mass media, prepares Americans for falling in love and using it as a necessary element in the establishment of intimate relationships.

5

Contemporary Sexuality

While marriage and family life consist of more than just a sexual relationship, sexuality is nevertheless an extremely important aspect of this social institution. This chapter explores the different conceptions and the social context of contemporary sexuality in the United States. In doing so it details both sexual standards and sexual practices. Heterosexuality, homosexuality, and sexually transmitted diseases are also discussed.

SEXUALITY AND SOCIETY

Concern about the proper role of sexuality in human relationships is nothing new. Throughout the ages, various societies have struggled with the question of the appropriate forms of sexual behavior. The issue is rooted in different views of the role of sexuality and in changing social contexts.

Different Conceptions of Sexuality

SEXUALITY AS REPRODUCTION

One way to view human sexuality is to limit its purpose to the reproduction of the species. While sexual intercourse for purposes of reproduction may have other consequences, such as pleasure or power, these are not its primary function.

This view largely underpins the conservative view of sexuality and most of the laws that attempt to regulate sexual behavior. Rubin (1965) described six major competing value systems in the study of human sexuality. Sex as reproduction falls somewhere between his "traditional repressive asceticism," which "proscribes any kind of sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship and accepts sex in marriage grudgingly, insisting upon the linkage of sex with procreation" (p. 186), and "enlightened asceticism," which takes a similar view but welcomes public debate about the issue.

SEXUALITY AS INDIVIDUAL PLEASURE

Sexuality can be recreational as well as procreational. In addition to its role in reproduction, sexuality affords most individuals considerable pleasure.

In contrast to other species, humans have no *estrus cycle*, a limited period of sexual arousal. The *sexual response cycle* (excitement and arousal, plateau, orgasm or climax, and resolution) of human beings is not time bound. Dogs and cats, for example, are in heat—sexually responsive—only at specific times. Men and women have no such limitations on their ability to be sexually stimulated and responsive.

The Sexual Response Cycle. Masters and Johnson (1966, 1970) essentially created the field of sex therapy with their identification of four stages in the typical sexual response cycle (see Fig. 5.1). This analysis allowed them—and later others—to locate problems in sexual responsiveness and to devise ways these could be alleviated.

Excitement and arousal is the first stage of the cycle. Arousal is the erection of the male penis as it is engorged with blood, and the lubrication of the female vagina. Human beings can be sexually aroused by a wide variety of stimuli: Sights, sounds, touch, smells, and even fantasy images can lead to sexual arousal.

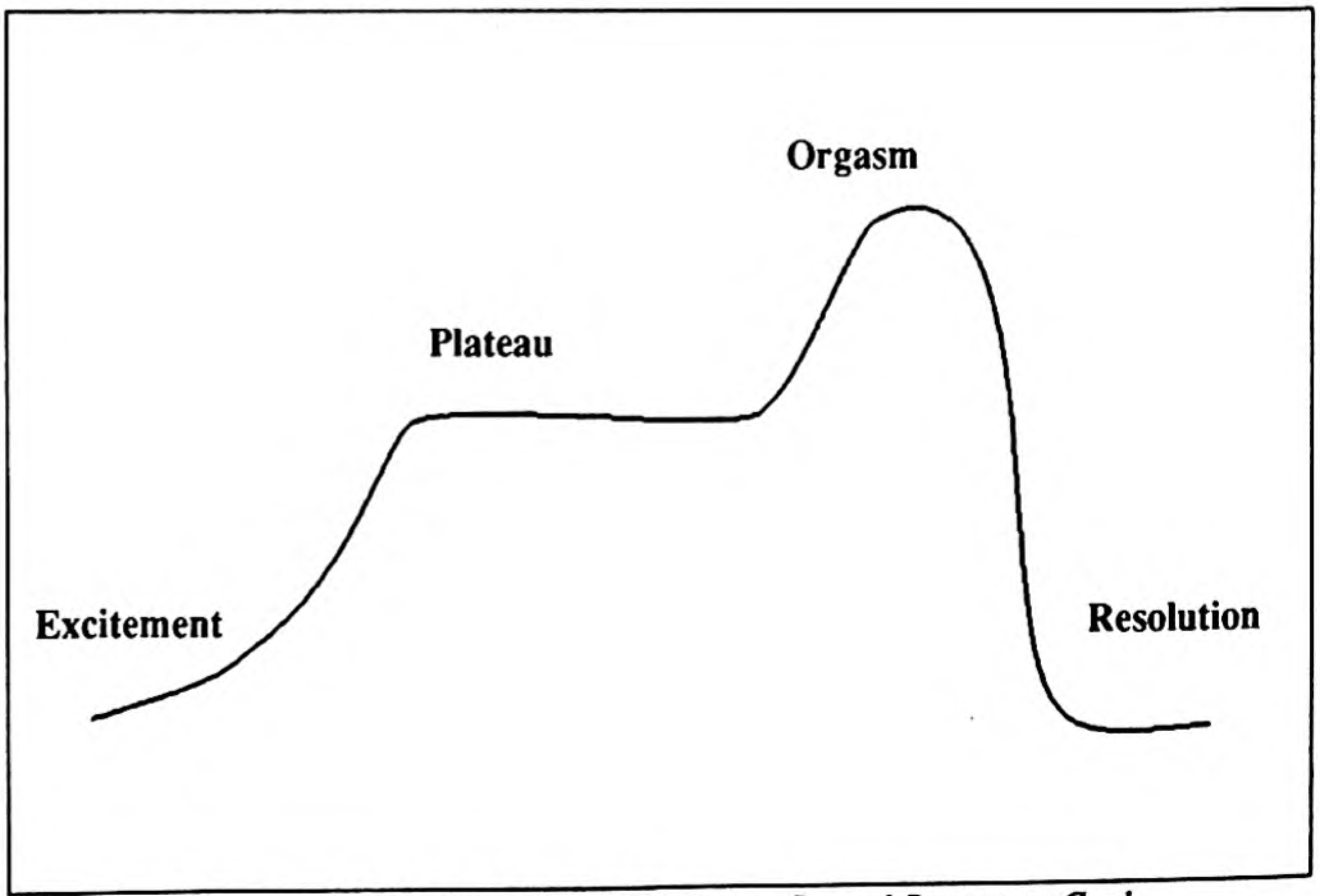

Fig. 5.1 Typical Four-Stage Human Sexual Response Cycle

Plateau is reached as the arousal levels off; the penis is fully erect, and the vagina is well lubricated. For many this is the point at which intercourse occurs. The physiology of a fully erect penis and a well-lubricated, receptive vagina generally provides an enjoyable sexual experience for both partners.

Orgasm or *climax* is evident in the pulsating release of sexual tension. For the man orgasm results in the expulsion of seminal fluid, containing sperm, along with muscular contractions at the base of the penis. It is often accompanied by deep thrusts of the penis into the vagina. For the woman there are several involuntary muscular contractions of the vaginal area. Despite popular views to the contrary, simultaneous orgasms are not necessary for sexual pleasure. While multiple orgasms are possible—but not necessary—for both men and women, men tend to have a longer *refractory period* during which an additional orgasm is not possible.

Resolution occurs as the sexual organs return to their typical resting state. This is often a period of relaxation and for some a time to rest or sleep. For others it may be a time for nonsexual intimacies and conversation. In any event, the sexual tension evident earlier subsides.

The balance between the recreational and procreational functions of sexuality varies not only among societies but also within societies at different periods of time. In American society today, in contrast to earlier historical periods, sexuality within and outside of marriage tends to be viewed more as a pleasurable experience than as a reproductive obligation.

SEXUALITY AS COUPLE COMMUNICATION AND INTIMACY

For many people sexual activity not only brings pleasure but also serves as an occasion for intimacy and communication. The physical aspects of sexuality—touching, fondling, kissing—are clear expressions of intimacy and a form of nonverbal communication. Pleasurable sexuality depends on the nature of the intimate relationship between the partners. This intimacy is both dependent upon and also furthers the subtle communication that takes place during sexual activity. Young people have often commented that they engage in sex because it is a way of reaching the other person, of expressing their feelings without the use of words.

Sexual Scripts. Gagnon and Simon (1973) use sexual scripts to refer to the culturally defined form that sexually relevant behavior is expected to take. Rigid scripts limit sexual communication by narrowing individuals' options. Flexible scripts require communication to reach agreement on what is both appropriate and desired. Matching sexual scripts facilitates sexual satisfaction.

The Social Context of Contemporary Sexuality

Sexual behavior, like any other behavior, is influenced by the surrounding social context. The relatively open nature of sexuality in contemporary American society derives from specific social conditions.

FACTORS AFFECTING SEXUAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

The Decline of Parental and Community Control of the Young. At an earlier time in American society parents had more control over the activities of their children, especially their dating and courtship behavior. Besides parents, community bonds were very strong and the scrutiny of neighbors and relatives served as an additional social mechanism limiting the freedom of young people. Several social and technological developments have occurred to change this situation.

The invention of the automobile and improvements in the cost and availability of mass transportation have given people greater mobility and freedom from parental and community view. The telephone has permitted frequent, inexpensive, and easy access to partner intimacy. Mass education has led to increasing numbers of young people leaving home for residentially based colleges and universities. This in turn has further reduced parental and community control and placed the young in communities of peers, who generally have different sexual norms from the adults back home. In short these changes have led to less pervasive adult supervision and greater peer support for flexible sexual norms.

The Lengthening of Adolescence. Improvements in health and nutrition have generally lowered the age at which *puberty*, or physiological sexual maturation, begins. At the same time, the increasing social and economic complexity of society has lengthened the time during which young people become independent, marry, and raise a family. Also, *adolescence*, the period between initial sexual maturation and socially defined maturity, lasts longer today than previously. In an earlier period the socially acceptable satisfaction of sexual needs did not require such long postponement. However, today, we also see an increasing trend in the frequency of teenage pregnancies, which shortens the period of adolescence for these young people.

The Availability of Contraception. Some form of contraception, though rudimentary, has always been available. Today, however, contraception is cheaper, more accessible, and more effective. This change has led to its increased use and has substantially changed both sexual attitudes and practices. Further developments on the horizon have the potential for still further changes in sexual relationships. Concern over AIDS has made the increasing use of condoms more likely.

The Erotic Environment. American society today is filled with erotic elements. Advertising in the mass media depends heavily on sexually tinged messages to sell products. Discussions and portrayals of sexual behavior in and outside of marriage are much more prevalent and graphic than in previous eras. The erotic nature of relationships is more out in the open. On the negative side, this change has tended to eroticize otherwise neutral activities and to increase the likelihood of sexual activity outside of marriage. On the positive side, such openness has tended to demystify sexuality, giving it a more routine place in everyday life.

Increased Permissiveness. The period of the 1960s and 1970s was one of social upheaval and change. There was an increasing liberalization of a number of social institutions, including politics, religion, and economics. Marriage and family life were similarly affected. Looser social controls and increasing permissiveness in intimate relationships were evident, especially among the young. "Do your own thing" became a catch phrase of the period. Social pressure among the young supported sexual relationships.

Though the 1980s and early 1990s were more conservative, the legacy of the 1960s and 1970s has persisted. And though the prevalence of AIDS has led many to reassess their sexual practices, the permissiveness engendered by the earlier decades generally continues.

CONTEMPORARY SEXUAL STANDARDS

Sexual Scripts

Sexual behavior is socially patterned. Sexual scripts are the sexual attitudes and practices that a society defines as appropriate. Lamanna and Riedmann (1991:120–121) identify two sexual scripts that are evident in American society—patriarchal sexuality and expressive sexuality. Patriarchal sexuality expresses the more traditional view of appropriate gender role behavior and has become less common recently. Expressive sexuality is more in tune with emerging conceptions of the essential similarity of men's and women's needs, and is becoming the more prevalent sexual script.

DIFFERENT SEXUAL SCRIPTS

Patriarchal Sexuality. In this script, sexuality is seen as different for men and women. Men are dominant; their sexuality is seen as a biological urge that produces physiological tension demanding release. In turn, this release produces considerable satisfaction. Women are considered sexually passive but may be aroused through persistent stimulation. Sexuality is seen basically as a biological necessity for reproduction. Thus, varied forms of sexual stimulation or sexual intercourse are considered inappropriate.

In this view, since men have an insistent biological urge their needs must be satisfied. Therefore, unmarried men find justification for sexual experiences, and married men whose wives do not provide them necessary sexual satisfaction are justified in seeking such release elsewhere. Since women are viewed as lacking this biological drive, premarital or extramarital sexual experiences or initiating sexual contact within marriage are taken as evidence that the enactors are bad or "loose" women. Further, since wives are generally economically dependent on husbands, they are expected to tolerate and satisfy the sexual demands of their husbands even if they themselves derive little or no pleasure from the experience.

Expressive Sexuality. The more contemporary sexual script in American society is expressive sexuality. In this view, sexuality is basic to *both* men and women. It is not simply a biological mechanism to ensure the reproduction of the species; it is a useful means of establishing intimacy and communication between people. Since seeking sexual pleasure is legitimate for both men and women, women who engage in nonmarital sexual encounters cannot be assumed to be bad or loose. While recreational sexuality is acceptable, casual sexual encounters that undermine intimacy and human communication are not seen as desirable.

In this script, women are as able to be sexually aroused and attain orgasm as are men. Thus, the physical release of sexual tension is as important and as pleasurable for women as it is for men. Sexual activity needs to be a meaningful experience for both partners. This view is gaining popularity in the United States today.

Sexual Standards

One of the most comprehensive and valuable studies of sexual attitudes of American youth, particularly college students, was conducted by Reiss (1960, 1967). In his research he found that these attitudes could be grouped into four different standards for behavior.

COMPETING SEXUAL STANDARDS

Abstinence. This standard argues that premarital sexual intercourse is improper for both men and women. This view tends to be supported by the religiously conservative and is based in part on the moral view that sexual experience should be reserved for marriage. In addition to its moral base, it is also pointed out that abstinence prevents sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. In all of Reiss's studies, as well as those by others, this standard is supported by only a small minority of young people.

The Double Standard. There are actually two double standards noted by Reiss.

The orthodox double standard holds that sexual intercourse is acceptable for men but not for women. This view is rooted in the long-standing belief that men and women are not equal and have different needs. It is based on the same kind of assumptions that define the patriarchal sexual script discussed earlier.

The transitional double standard still involves the right of men to engage in premarital sexual intercourse; however, it extends this right to women who are in love or engaged to their partners. Casual sex is acceptable for men, but not for women. The sexual needs of men and women are not yet equal, but this standard sees them as less different than does the orthodox view.

The Permissiveness-with-Affection Standard. This standard is apparently a further evolution of the transitional double standard and permits premarital sexual activity for *both* men and women as long as it involves an affectionate and reasonably stable relationship. Thus it holds men and women to a single standard—love.

The major change this standard signals is the increasing acceptance of women's sexuality. At the same time it holds men to a premarital standard not earlier required—that they have strong affection for their sexual partners. Most research indicates that this is the predominant sexual standard among young Americans today.

The Permissiveness-Without-Affection Standard. This is the image that traditionalists have of contemporary sexual behavior. They see the young as hopping in and out of each other's beds as the mood suits them. Sexuality is primarily seen in recreational terms, with no relationship between partners necessary. In this standard anything goes; "scoring" and pleasure are all that count. However, the reality of young people's view of sexuality is quite different. While this view is endorsed more frequently by men than by women, only a small minority of each accept it. Increasingly, American youth believe that to be acceptable, sexuality must be integrated into an ongoing intimate relationship.

Ambiguity and Confusion Today

Reiss's analysis shows that all four standards for behavior exist in American society. While most young people support the permissiveness-with-affection standard, not all do. Moreover, adults over the age of thirty tend to be somewhat more conservative. Young people get conflicting messages from their peers and usually different messages from their parents and clergy. Even those adults who may have been permissive when they were younger tend to have less permissive standards for their children. The AIDS epidemic and the conservative backlash of the 1980s have added further ambiguity and confusion to the social context in which young people today have to make choices about sexuality and intimate relationships.

While most youth see the premarital standards of an earlier period as being more restrictive than they would like, the proscriptions were at least clear and generally supported by society. Today, increased freedom and choice bring with them more confusion and ambiguity. Sexual values that may conform to the standards of one set of peers may deviate from those of another set, and both may be in conflict with respected parents.

SEXUAL PRACTICES

Forms of Sexual Behavior

MASTURBATION

Self-manipulation of the genitals is something that practically all men have engaged in at one time or another during their lives. A substantial number of women have also masturbated at some time. Masturbation is practiced by both married and unmarried men and women.

PETTING

The forms of physical contact that lead to sexual arousal short of intercourse are referred to as petting. These include kissing, hugging or cuddling, and fondling. In an earlier time fondling an *erogenous zone*, an area of the body that is sensitive to touch and is sexually arousing, over clothing was called "light petting" and inside the clothing "heavy petting." This distinction is rarely made today.

Frequently, petting is a prelude to sexual intercourse and is called *foreplay*. However, it may also be an end in itself—either as a form of sexual stimulation and satisfaction or as a noncoital way of achieving orgasm. Women are somewhat more likely to achieve orgasm through petting than are men (Kinsey, et al., 1948: 534–536; 1953: 275).

ORAL-GENITAL STIMULATION

The frequency of oral-genital behavior has apparently increased recently. *Cunnilingus* refers to oral stimulation of the woman's genital area, and *fellatio* to oral stimulation of the man's genitals. Mutual oral-genital stimulation is generally referred to as "*sixty-nine*."

While more common previously among college-educated youth, the frequency of oral-genital stimulation has increased recently among those with less education. In fact Gagnon and Simon (1987) indicate that it has become a major part of the initial sexual script of young single people. Its popularity may be attributable to its ability to provide heightened sexual pleasure without the fear of pregnancy or the need for birth control.

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE (COITUS)

This form of sexual behavior between men and women involves the insertion of the penis into the vagina. This usually occurs after some degree of sexual arousal that leads to an erect penis and a receptive, lubricated vagina. There are a number of different positions the partners can take. A common one involves the woman lying on her back with the man on top and facing her, traditionally called the "missionary position." However, a number of variations are possible.

There is no simple connection between the duration of intercourse and sexual pleasure. This depends on a variety of circumstances, including the duration and "success" of foreplay, fatigue, and general satisfaction with the relationship. However, too short a duration may result in the woman's being unable to experience orgasm.

Social Patterns

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Many people view the changes in sexual attitudes and practices that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s as nothing less than a sexual revolution. And for many this is considered the first such dramatic change in our sexual habits. However, the data collected by Kinsey and his colleagues (Kinsey, et al., 1953: 339) demonstrate that an earlier dramatic change took place for women born in the first decade of the twentieth century. It was this group that came of age during and helped define the period called the "Roaring Twenties."

Frequency. Premarital sexual experience has increased in frequency over the past few decades. The research of Bell and his colleagues (Bell and Chaskes, 1970; Bell and Coughey, 1980) makes it clear that starting in the 1960s the sexual attitudes and activities of young people became decidedly more permissive (see Table 5.1). Not only did the percentage of women who reported having engaged in premarital intercourse increase substantially for all three levels of relationships, but the percentage who felt guilty about doing so also dropped dramatically over a ten-year period.

	% reporting premarital intercourse		**% of those having intercourse who felt they "went too far"**	
Level of commitment	**1958**	**1968**	**1958**	**1968**
Dating	10	23	65	36
Going steady	15	28	61	30
Engaged	31	39	49	20
Total Number of Respondents	**250**	**205**	**260**	**205**

Table 5.1 Frequency of and Attitude Toward Premarital Intercourse by Level of Commitment for Women at a Large Urban University, 1958 and 1968. Adapted from Bell and Charles, 1970.

These changes are tied to the shifting social context described earlier. Moreover, this permissiveness continued to increase into the early 1980s, though more slowly, and tended to level off thereafter. In short, premarital sexual experience became socially legitimate.

The Consequences. The consequences of the sexual revolution are many and varied. Premarital intercourse began in their early teens for both boys and girls. Marriage was delayed, though its incidence was not substantially reduced; the average age at first marriage for men increased from 22.8 in 1960 to 24.8 in 1980 and from 20.3 to 22.3 for women over the same period. Cohabitation became more frequent, though more as a stage in the process of establishing intimate relationships than as an alternative lifestyle. The frequency of premarital pregnancies and premarital births also increased. Wallis (1985) estimates that given the present trends it is possible that approximately 40 percent of today's fourteen-year-old girls will be pregnant at least once before they reach twenty years of age.

The social and economic costs of teenage pregnancy are considerable; young mothers have a high divorce rate, increased health risks, lower rates of educational attainment and hence reduced job opportunities, and more difficult and complicated births. Their children tend to have less success in school and exhibit lower IQs than children of older mothers. However, more recently, Furstenberg's (1987) research demonstrates that well-conceived health, social, and educational support programs for teenage mothers can successfully and relatively inexpensively counter many of the negative effects of early childbearing for many teenage mothers.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Only relatively recently has the issue of *sexual orientation*—preference for a partner of the same or opposite sex—become a major public social concern. The sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s raised the issue of the legitimacy of *homosexuality*—preference for a partner of the same sex—as an acceptable sexual orientation. Since then, increasing numbers of homosexual men and women have "come out of the closet" to make known their sexual preference and assert their right to equal treatment.

It has become common to refer to heterosexuals as "straight," female homosexuals as "lesbian," and male homosexuals as "gay."

This characterization implies that sexual orientation is dichotomous, that a person is either heterosexual or homosexual. A number of investigators have considered humans as inherently bisexual (e.g., Beach, 1977), while others view sexual orientation as a continuum with people arranged along a line from completely and always heterosexual to completely and always homosexual (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, 1948). The existence of people who are *bisexual*—individuals who form intimate sexual attachments to members of both sexes—seems to support these alternative views.

Explanations of Homosexuality

BIOLOGICAL THEORY

In this view, homosexuality is due to some genetic or general biological difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals. Recently, some research has pointed to possible anatomical differences between gay and straight men in the structure of a part of the brain as a possible factor in homosexuality. Considerably more research is required before sexual orientation is proven to be tied solely to biological factors.

CLASSICAL PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

One of the most controversial theories about the origin of homosexuality derives from psychoanalytic theory, the school of thought within psychology initiated by Sigmund Freud. In this view, homosexuality results from men's relationship to their mothers. Either extreme maternal deprivation or overprotection is believed to have led to incomplete psychosexual development, which is then seen to be manifested in homosexuality. There is little support for this view outside of psychoanalysis.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Another school of thought within psychology, this theory suggests that homosexuality is a result of learning. Homosexuals model themselves after those with that orientation or they are "conditioned" to respond sexually to members of the same sex.

Within this context, what has been learned can be unlearned, and there has been some modest success in applying behavioral learning techniques, though this has generated controversy among such practitioners. Some psychologists and psychiatrists have argued that homosexual behavior should not be considered deviant and efforts to change it should only proceed if a gay or lesbian person desires such treatment. Recently homosexuality has been eliminated as a disease in the latest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* used by clinical psychologists and psychiatrists.

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Sociologists who have studied homosexuality point to the interaction of social and interpersonal factors that play a role in fostering a particular sexual orientation. They emphasize the importance of socialization within the family and peer group, as well as general social norms, in contributing to homosexuality.

Theories about homosexuality abound but none of them has been accepted as *the* explanation. It is likely that each may contribute something to a more comprehensive explanation, but there is not yet a definitive and generally accepted answer to explain why some people are homosexual.

Homosexual Relationships

NONMARITAL INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

By and large, homosexuals want the same things from their intimate relationships as do heterosexuals. The research by Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) indicates that there is substantial similarity between straight couples, both married or cohabiting, and homosexual couples for many facets of their intimate relationships. In fact, gender is more important than sexual orientation in influencing the nature of intimate relationships; men and women differ more than "straights" and "gays." Similarly, the work of Peplau (Peplau, 1983; Peplau and Gordon, 1983) finds that gay men and lesbians want stability, affection, companionship, and the chance for personal growth in their intimate relationships. As with heterosexuals, gays and lesbians want partners who are warm, affectionate, and honest. Perhaps the only major difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals was revealed in a study by Peplau and Cochrane (1980)—heterosexuals report a greater desire for exclusivity in their sexual relationship than do homosexuals; however, this difference needs to be seen against the prevalence of heterosexual extramarital sexuality (see chapter 12).

HOMOSEXUAL FAMILIES

A substantial number of homosexuals have been married at one point. Moreover, an increasing number of cities and municipalities have given or are considering giving stable homosexual relationships some of the same legal rights as those enjoyed by married couples. In some jurisdictions, "domestic partnerships" allow gays and lesbians access to health benefits, insurance, and property rights through their partner. Increasingly, the courts have permitted custody rights after a divorce to one of the partners even when they are involved in a lesbian relationship, as long as the children are seen to be cared for and well adjusted in that setting; legal support for this situation varies depending upon the locale. Custody rights for the children of gay men have been less certain.

Homophobia

Many people have a strong, irrational fear of homosexuality and homosexuals, an attitude called *homophobia* or *homoerotophobia*. This attitude leads such individuals to shun gays and lesbians and to treat them poorly. Homophobia is deeply ingrained in American society, making it a social concern rather than just an individual problem. While social attitudes toward homosexuals have improved over the past two decades, the AIDS epidemic, which is considered by many to be a "homosexual disease," has hardened some people's attitudes. However, attitudes toward homosexuals have become slightly more favorable of late. Gays and lesbians have taken the traditional route of organizing and using their collective strength to promote their social agenda for tolerance, equality, and social recognition.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)

Recurrent Forms of STDs

There are numerous diseases contracted and transmitted through sexual contact. Formerly called venereal diseases, or VD, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are nothing new. The two most common over the years have been *syphilis*, which is not only very painful and causes psychiatric disorders but in the past was almost always fatal, and *gonorrhea*, which can produce blindness and sterility. Antibiotics, improvements in public health, and better public education programs have sharply reduced the incidence of these two diseases. *Chlamydia*, a severe urinary tract infection in women, is another widespread STD that leads to infertility and can be fatal. It, too, is now treatable by antibiotics. Finally, *genital herpes*, recurrent sores and lesions on the genitals due to the herpes simplex II virus, affects large numbers of people. It can produce fever, headaches, pain, a general feeling of not being well, and difficulty in urinating. At the present time there is no cure, but an antiviral drug and laser therapy are available to reduce the pain and the number of recurrent outbreaks of the sores.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

The STD that has caused the most concern recently is *AIDS*, a viral condition caused by *HIV, human immune deficiency virus*, which substantially weakens the body's natural immune system against infection and invasion by foreign substances. Thus, individuals who develop AIDS are susceptible to various types of infections and diseases.

The average incubation period between initial infection with HIV and the appearance of definitive criteria for AIDS is about ten years, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Only blood tests will reveal the presence of the virus prior to the outbreak of symptoms. As a consequence of this long and variable incubation period, more people are infected than the available statistics record and they are infectious to others.

THE DYNAMICS OF AIDS

Symptoms. There are many symptoms of HIV infection, including low-grade fever, weight loss, night sweats, swollen lymph glands, fatigue, weakness, and a general feeling of malaise. While many people occasionally have one or more of these symptoms, it is their combination and severity that suggest the presence of the virus. Eventually, in full-blown AIDS, about a third of all patients develop *Kaposi's sarcoma*, a form of cancer with skin lesions and discoloration, and most develop a devastating form of pneumonia, PCP. Autopsies have shown that AIDS infections can affect every major organ system in the body.

Treatment. There is no known cure for AIDS at the present time. Treatment with the drug AZT (azidothymidine) apparently slows down the progression of the AIDS virus and prolongs survival. Interferon, a protein, is being used experimentally to treat Kaposi's sarcoma, but it does not seem to rejuvenate the deteriorating immune system. There are major research programs currently under way that seek a treatment for AIDS, but as yet no cure has been found.

Incidence. The first known case of AIDS occurred in 1979. During the following decade it is believed that about 1.5 million persons in the United States were infected with HIV, almost 100,000 developed full-blown AIDS, and about 55,000 died of the disease. By 1993 it is estimated that in the United States a half million people will have AIDS and more than half of those carrying the virus will have died (U.S. Centers for Disease Control, 1989b).

Most AIDS victims are white men, mainly between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five. However, more than 250,000 college students have been infected with HIV (U.S. Centers for Disease Control, 1989a). The epidemic has grown in both African-American and Hispanic communities, and incidence is on the rise in groups previously deemed at low risk, such as heterosexual women and teenagers of both sexes. Pediatric AIDS cases, infants infected in the womb, are also increasing. While the disease is found throughout the country, New York and California have the highest concentration of AIDS patients. This geographic concentration is probably a result of the greater numbers of homosexual and bisexual men living in New York City and San Francisco and the higher incidence of intravenous drug users in these two cities.

Transmission. HIV lives in the bloodstream and semen. It can also be found in vaginal fluids, urine, and feces; however, these are rarely the transmission routes for AIDS. Mothers can transmit the AIDS virus to their unborn children in the womb and to their infants through their milk, if they breast-feed. HIV also enters the body through the bloodstream, and this can occur through breaks in the skin due to lesions or small cuts. There is no evidence that the AIDS virus has been transmitted through saliva, tears, perspiration, hugging, coughing, sneezing, toilet seats, swimming pools, doorknobs, dishes, towels, food handling or any other incidental form of contact.

AIDS is thought to have originated in Africa, and it is transmitted there mainly through heterosexual contact. In the United States, the primary sources of AIDS have been homosexual contact (anal intercourse) and the use of infected needles during intravenous drug use. The recent increase in the number of AIDS cases transmitted through heterosexual intercourse is linked to infection during intravenous drug use or bisexual activity.

The Politics of AIDS. AIDS has been invested with moral and political significance. Some people see it as just retribution for a "sinful" lifestyle. Some see it as a private concern of the individual who contracts the disease. Since AIDS initially was prevalent among poor and minority groups, activists have argued that the government has been reluctant to commit the necessary resources to understand and to treat AIDS. The recent increase of AIDS among heterosexuals and middle-class individuals may partially explain the slow, but increasing, commitment on the part of the federal government to combat the disease.

The AIDS problem has led to violations of the civil liberties of homosexuals and other groups who are seen as major carriers of HIV. Until recently, for example, United States citizens of Haitian and sub-Saharan background were not allowed to donate blood to the Red Cross even though the prevalence of AIDS in the United States was much higher than in Haiti. Homosexuals have been denied access to jobs, housing, and health services because of the fear that they were carriers of AIDS. While many of these issues have been more openly addressed in recent years, there still remains a legacy of distrust and discrimination against those living a different lifestyle; fear about AIDS has tended to make this situation worse. There does seem to be some evidence, however, that the assertion of human rights by activist groups and better understanding of the way in which AIDS is transmitted will lessen these threats to civil liberties.

The most recent controversy over AIDS concerns the call for mandatory testing of health care professionals such as dentists, nurses, and physicians for the presence of AIDS. Despite the fact that through 1991 there was only one documented case of a health professional transmitting AIDS to patients, the possibility of such an occurrence has led to calls for legislation to require all health care professionals to be tested for AIDS. Those who test positive would have to reveal this information and to refrain from any procedure that would expose their patients to the risk of AIDS. The call for mandatory restrictions has not resulted in action as yet, though the CDC has asked health professionals to submit voluntarily to tests for the AIDS virus. The CDC has further suggested that those testing positive should avoid engaging in any medical procedures that would subject their patients to the risk of acquiring the virus.

Sexuality plays an important role in human relationships. Some have viewed sexuality in terms of its reproductive function. Others stress its ability to provide pleasure and become a vehicle of intimacy and communication *between partners. Humans do not have an estrus cycle that limits their period of sexual responsiveness.*

Sexuality in the United States today is relatively open and permissive. This flexibility derives from a variety of social changes, including technological advances, increased mobility, and the decline of parental and community control of the young. Moreover, the length of adolescence has increased, contraception has become more widely and easily available, and the mass media have contributed to an increasingly erotic environment.

The traditional patriarchal sexual script is gradually giving way to one that accords sexual needs and rights to both men and women. Studies of college students point to the existence of four sexual standards: abstinence, a double standard (either orthodox or transitional), permissiveness-with-affection, and permissiveness-without-affection.

Sexuality may be expressed through masturbation, petting, oral-genital stimulation, or sexual intercourse. There was a substantial increase in the frequency and acceptability of all forms of nonmarital sexual activity during the 1920s and again in the 1960s and 1970s. This last sexual revolution has led to earlier sexual experiences, a delay in the age at first marriage, an increase in premarital pregnancies and births, and a relatively widespread increase in cohabitation.

Homosexuality has become more open. Various explanations of homosexuality, including biological, psychoanalytic, learning theory, and sociological attempts, remain at best incomplete. Recent research on gay and lesbian relationships suggest a substantial similarity between heterosexuals' and homosexuals' conceptions of intimate relationships. However, there is a pervasive homophobia within American society that manifests itself in violence against gays and in other violations of their civil rights.

There are many diseases transmitted through sexual contact. Syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and genital herpes have given way in importance to AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome. At the present time there is no known cure for AIDS. The deadly nature of the disease and its link to those involved in what many see as a sinful lifestyle have led to an initial lack of governmental resources devoted to understanding and eliminating its effects, and to discrimination against groups considered to be carriers of the AIDS virus.

6

Dating and Courtship

Dating is the primary means by which young people form intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex. They do this for many reasons and with a number of consequences. The styles of dating have changed over the past several generations and also differ by social class. Courtship—serious dating that is geared toward marriage—is a developmental, interactive process. Cohabitation is a new element in the courtship process. Who engages in cohabitation and with what frequency vary.

DATING

Typically, *dating* is the "recreational association of uncommitted heterosexual couples" (Udry, 1974: 84). This social process is relatively new in American society, having evolved during this century. Casual interaction between young people of the opposite sex was uncommon earlier. While not an American invention, dating is more extensive and more prominent in this society than in any other.

The increasing urbanization and mobility that have occurred in the United States during this century have brought young people into closer and more sustained contact than previously. Together with the conjugal courtship system (see chapter 2), the social movements for equality between the sexes have furthered the development of dating as an important social process.

Reasons for Dating

When young people are asked why they date, they give a variety of reasons. Some date because "it is the thing to do," some because of parental or peer pressure, and some because it provides access to social activities, companionship or sexual experience. Dating also offers the opportunity for a relatively secure relationship or for exploring possibilities of a suitable marriage partner. Young people's standing in their peer group often depends on whether and whom they date. In short, the reasons why young people date are numerous and varied.

Functions of Dating

Whatever the reason for dating, participating in this social process fulfills certain functions. Skipper and Nass (1966), drawing on the work of a number of family sociologists, point out four important functions of dating.

RECREATION

Dating provides pleasurable experiences for the participants. The act of dating is itself a form of enjoyment, and the activities engaged in—attending a movie, concert, or sports event—provide additional entertainment.

SOCIALIZATION

Through dating, boys and girls increase their knowledge of each other. Both learn about the similarities and differences between their two sexes. More important, they learn how to interact with one another in a way that is different from their activities with same-sex peers. In the course of learning about the opposite sex they also learn about themselves through feedback the other person provides.

STATUS GRADING

Status or standing in the peer group of young people is often influenced by whether and whom they date. Dating an attractive and highly desirable person will raise a person's prestige in the eyes of her or his friends. More than half a century ago Waller (1937) described this as the "rating and dating complex" of college students. The link between dating and status continues today.

COURTSHIP OR PARTNER SELECTION

Clearly, dating is part of the system of conjugal courtship in American society. It is the primary mechanism through which young people get together and assess potential marriage partners. Through dating they often find out which kinds of people best suit them and which kinds they should avoid.

Stages of Dating

Dating takes place over a number of years. The age at which dating begins has gradually been dropping so that it is not uncommon today for those in their early teens, and even preteens, to date. While there is considerable variability in dating, there are some consistencies in the process. One such consistency is the stages through which dating progresses.

GROUP DATING

Typically dating begins with a group of young boys and girls jointly engaging in a common activity. One or two generations ago this occurred in the early teens; today it is not surprising to find this pattern among elementary school children. The activity may be a school dance or a trip to the movies, but whatever it is, there are several members of each sex involved and there is no explicit pairing off. The group nature of the activity is important since it provides each of the participants with a social support system in this new and anxiety-filled situation. Many boys and girls are just not comfortable with the opposite sex at this age; they don't have as much in common as they do with members of their own sex. Many lack the self-confidence and communicative skills to sustain a relationship with the opposite sex on their own, and in numbers they find support.

Double Dating. A group of daters explicitly including couples is a transitional form. These young people have developed sufficient interpersonal skills and self-confidence to maintain a relationship with a member of the opposite sex. However, the presence of other couples provides peer support and relieves them at least partially of the burden of being the only one to sustain the conversation or activity. While double dating also occurs later in the dating process, and for entirely different reasons, at this stage its primary function is one of social support.

INDIVIDUAL DATING

As self-confidence and interpersonal skills grow, individuals feel increasingly comfortable with their ability to sustain an enjoyable relationship as a couple on their own. Even though they may date jointly with other couples, the others are no longer there for social support but often for shared enjoyment. Individual dating takes two forms—casual and serious, or committed.

Casual Individual Dating. This is the first step after group dating. Colloquially, it is known as "playing the field." It is casual in the sense that there is no commitment on the part of either of the dating partners to anything beyond the particular date. Each has other dates as well. This form is well suited to the American system of conjugal courtship, allowing for recreation and for an exploration of potential marriage partners without a premature commitment to any of them.

Serious, or Committed Individual Dating. Another form of individual dating is marked by an understanding between the dating partners. In some cases the understanding is one of dating preference. While each may date others, the preference is that they go out as a couple. In an earlier time this was called "going steadily"; now it is more commonly referred to as "seeing" the other person. In other cases, the commitment is an exclusive one, excluding other dating partners. While at this stage there is no commitment to marry, the seriousness of the relationship suggests marriage as a possibility. Earlier, this was called "going steady"; now often called "seeing someone."

ENGAGEMENT

This occurs when there is a definite commitment on the part of the two to marry. The commitment is often made public, announcing a change in status for the two. (A more detailed discussion of engagement is found in chapter 8.)

Criticisms of Traditional Dating

A generation or two ago, dating often involved a complex set of rules that were linked to traditional conceptions of gender roles. The man was supposed to initiate the date, and was expected to pick up the woman at her home. There he often was met by the woman's parents. On the date he was expected to pay for all expenses. In return he often expected some token of affection—a kiss, petting, even intercourse. It was up to the woman to decide "how far to go."

This pattern has long been criticized on several grounds. Specifically it has certain characteristics that make it unsuitable for contemporary relations between the sexes.

SPECIFIC CRITICISMS

A Sexist and Deceitful Game. The traditional pattern is linked to a sexist view of gender roles. The man is supposed to dominate and the woman to be submissive. The pattern is deceitful in that typically the woman sees the situation in terms of affection and companionship, even marriage, while the man sees it as a pleasurable and perhaps sexual experience. In essence, the form is considered merely a game for the man but a more serious encounter for the woman. But games must be played by rules and the critics argue that men and women see the rules differently.

Superficial and "Market-Oriented." Not only is the game sexist and deceitful, but it thrives on superficiality. It is not in the interest of the participants to show their true selves, but only those superficial aspects that will further their interests. Women, it is argued, emphasize their feminine characteristics hoping to engage a man's sexual interest and then use it to further his involvement in the relationship. Men stress those aspects of themselves they think will attract women's commitment and make them likely to be receptive to sexual advances.

Anxiety-Arousing. This sexist, deceitful, and superficial game is extremely anxiety-producing. Both partners need to understand what the other wants and how to arouse the other person's interest without compromising their own aims. This is not an easy task, as most young people come to realize. Thus, they are anxious about the relationship and their performance in the game that establishes it.

Changing Styles of Dating

While the traditional style of dating still persists for some (Milano and Hall, 1986), considerable change has taken place over the past few decades. Dating has become more informal, relaxed, and egalitarian for many young people. In fact the term "dating" is less used today. Libby (1976) describes the way in which young men and women associate today as "getting together." Initially, they are less tied to a single person and engage in activities in small groups. Though this seems superficially similar to an earlier stage of group dating, it is in fact a more self-assured and egalitarian form.

Getting together tends to blur the distinction between sexual and nonsexual activities. Men and women initially associate as people sharing common interests, not as dating partners. Women are free both to initiate activities and to pay their share of the costs. Couples may meet at the site of the activity rather than insisting on the man calling for the woman at her home.

Paired relationships may develop out of this less anxiety-producing environment. But since the two people have had a chance to get to know each other before this occurs, traditional gender roles are less likely to structure their relationship.

Social Class Differences in Dating

The data upon which the discussion of dating and getting together are based have been derived primarily from college students. It is important to point out that there are differences in these patterns among the upper, middle, and lower classes.

UPPER-CLASS DATING

Families exert much more social control over the dating behavior of young people in the upper class than in the other classes. Strict residential segregation and attendance at elite colleges restrict potential partners to members of the same class, though cross-class relationships do occasionally occur.

There is often more supervision over the behavior of young people in the upper class than in the others. Formalized and supervised opportunities for associating with the opposite sex are often provided through arranged parties, dances, and socials. Activities in which numbers of young men and women get together is as frequent as are opportunities for typical dating. For example, "coming out" parties for eighteen-year-old women are typical occasions on which to form intraclass social acquaintanceships. Young women are introduced to a number of eligible young men at such functions and only gradually narrow interest down to a single potential partner. Social status results from having a number of eligible suitors in the earlier stages.

MIDDLE-CLASS DATING

While the dating behavior of young people in the middle class is less supervised than in the upper class, there is still a considerable degree of family control. Here, too, formally planned school and family functions allow for groups of young men and women to meet one another. Informal activities such as going to concerts, sports events, and roller rinks also serve to bring young people together. Residences in this class are often large and comfortable enough for groups of young people to spend time together in one another's homes. However, pairing off is much more rapid than in the upper class, and social status is a consequence of having an early serious and committed relationship.

It is not uncommon for men and women to use their friends to find out if someone they like would return their interest. Getting together informally is quite common in the large public universities, attended by many middle-class young people. At times this is done in small groups, at others as couples. This "hanging out" allows people to get to know one another without the anxiety produced by defining their getting together as a date.

LOWER-CLASS DATING

Young people in the lower class tend to be less supervised than those in the upper or middle classes. They often start dating earlier and form steady relationships sooner.

Since they are less likely to attend college or to have large homes, the social activities of young people in this class often center around commercial entertainment or just hanging out in the local neighborhood establishments. There is a tendency for dating behavior in this class to follow the lines of more traditional gender roles.

Selected Issues in Dating

The experience of dating is difficult for many young people, centering around several concerns.

INITIATION OF THE DATE

The initiation of a date is difficult for many young people. The ever-present fear of rejection hovers over their attempts. As a consequence most initial efforts to establish a relationship are tentatively offered; then they can be easily withdrawn with little loss of face if not reciprocated. The flirtations of young women and the "line" used by young men are such mechanisms; they invite a response, but can be dismissed if the desired response is not forthcoming. For both humanitarian and pragmatic reasons, most young men and women learn to turn away unwanted overtures without severely damaging the other's sense of self.

PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS

There is no question that physical attractiveness plays an important part in the dating behavior of young people. Those who are physically attractive have a head start in the dating process. However, there is considerable variation in what is defined as physically attractive. Some men like tall women, others short. Some women like muscular men, others like those who are tall and angular. Tastes differ. However, American culture does provide certain standards of attractiveness through the media, and these images influence individual conceptions of beauty.

Though it has often been thought that physical appearance is more important to men, the research is actually conflicting. What is important is that those who are attractive also possess other positive attributes. This combination gives them an advantage in dating.

Physical attractiveness is especially important in the early stages of dating, as first impressions depend heavily on physical appearance. Once a relationship is under way, however, other characteristics of the partner take on increasing importance.

WHO PAYS?

In traditional dating the man paid any expenses incurred on a date, including food, entertainment, and transportation. In this arrangement the woman often repaid these costs through a variety of forms of sexual contact—a kiss, petting, intercourse. Today this "bargain" is no longer accepted. The growing independence of women and their desire for equality in relationships have made the issue of who pays—and for what—a much more open question to be negotiated by each couple. How this discussion is handled and when it should occur is another issue currently faced by dating couples.

LEARNING APPROPRIATE DATING BEHAVIOR

Dating behavior needs to be learned. There are several of sources of such information.

Observing Older Youths Who Are Dating. Older peers often provide models to emulate. This is especially true when a person has older same-sex siblings. However, this learning is quite limited since most dating behavior of older youth takes place outside the view of the younger observer.

Parental Instructions. Parents are another source of information about dating behavior. Parents can advise their children, especially girls, what to do and what not to do. They often draw upon their own dating experiences, and children are quick to note the substantial changes that have taken place over the years.

Discussions with Friends. Talk about dating is common among young people. Daters express their views as well as their experiences to each other. This includes how they handled certain situations and what the consequences were. Since peers are closer to the immediate situation than are parents, their advice often carries considerable weight.

The Mass Media. The media provide potent models of dating behavior. Magazines, movies, and especially television and music are important sources of information about appropriate dating behavior. The dramatic portrayals available through the media give added impetus to their role as teacher.

The Dating Experience Itself. Experience teaches dating behavior. The very experience of dating serves as a context for learning and trying out presumed appropriate behavior. The reaction of the dating partner also provides useful feedback.

VIOLENCE AND DATE RAPE

Violence in dating relationships has been receiving increasing public attention recently. However, Kirkpatrick and Kanin's (1957) study in the 1950s demonstrated that there was dating violence on college campuses even then. As with most acts of violence against women, *date or acquaintance rape* tends to be underreported. It has been estimated (Seligman, 1984) that 60 percent of reported rapes are of this type, in which a man physically forces his date or acquaintance to have intercourse against her will.

Despite its occurrence in the past, the available evidence suggests that date rape has increased considerably in recent years. It has been estimated that approximately 20 percent of college women have experienced date rape or attempted date rape. It must be emphasized that date rape, like stranger rape, is a criminal act.

Date rape is in part a result of male and female socialization. Boys are taught to be assertive if not aggressive in social relationships, to push for what they want. Further, they are taught that they are expected to be the initiator of sexual encounters, and that girls cannot admit that they want the experience. Girls are taught to be considerate of other people's feelings, to reject someone gently if they have to. Thus, when pressed some women say they would "prefer" not to, or they are not "ready." Men take a lack of a firm "no" to mean "yes." Those dealing with this phenomenon have advised women to be absolutely firm and clear in their decision about sexual intercourse, and have cautioned men to understand that anything less than a clear "yes" is really a "no." In many cases, however, miscommunication is not the issue. Men know that their sexual advance is not desired, but they pursue it nonetheless.

The consequences of date rape are sometimes more psychologically devastating to a woman than rape by a stranger. In addition to the frightening, painful, and humiliating experience of rape, women have to deal with the knowledge that they were violated by someone they knew and perhaps trusted. Consequently, they may call their judgment into question and become obsessed with any role they think may have had in inviting the violator's behavior, even though it is clear that they are not responsible.

Most colleges and universities have developed various programs to alert students to the dangers of date rape. They provide orientation to both men and women to help them understand each other better. Women are given information on how to avoid situations that are potentially threatening and what to do if they find themselves in such a situation. Men are advised to respect a woman's right to say no. Counseling and therapy programs for rape victims have become more common.

BREAKING UP

An earlier popular song says that "breaking up is hard to do." While there has been only a modest amount of research on breaking up, most individuals can attest to its difficulty. Research in this area has often focused on the adjustment required following a broken relationship. For example, Grasha and Kirschenbaum (1986) point out the loneliness, anger, and worry that accompany the termination of an intimate relationship. They suggest that people can adjust to this experience by locating an appropriate role model who has successfully gone through the same experience. Support groups or sympathetic friends are also useful. Understanding that blaming oneself is neither accurate nor helpful is part of an effective adjustment process.

COURTSHIP

When dating progresses to the stage in which two people are serious in their commitment to each other, the couple is said to be involved in *courtship*, the practice of paying "court" or attempting to win the attention and favor of another. Courtship is appropriate in societies such as the United States, where marriage is decided by two people who are involved with one another rather than having their marriage arranged by their families.

Courtship as a Developmental, Interactive Process

Courtship involves the interaction between two partners. What happens at one point in the relationship is affected by what has happened earlier and by what is anticipated for the future. This developmental aspect of courtship gives it a dynamic quality.

AN ANALYSIS OF COURTSHIP

A "Funnel" Process. The developmental aspects of courtship are similar to a fluid flowing through a funnel (see Fig. 6.1). Once the fluid enters the top of a funnel it must flow down to its base. If there are holes at various points in the side of the funnel the fluid may be able to escape through them. Thus fluid entering a funnel can either flow through it to its end or exit earlier through the holes in its side; it cannot, under normal conditions, flow back up and out the top.

Once two people have developed a certain level of commitment to each other they can either continue to deepen that commitment (fluid flowing through the funnel to the bottom) or they can leave the relationship (fluid exiting through one of funnel's side holes). Just as fluid does not normally flow back up and out of the funnel, the partners are unlikely to be able to return to a previous level of commitment. For example, if the two have been sexually intimate it is unlikely they can maintain the relationship on a nonsexual basis.

The funnel example is useful in another way. As fluid flows down the funnel its speed increases. Similarly, as people continue the courtship process, their level of commitment often increases rapidly. This is a consequence of the deeper intimacy that accompanies growing levels of commitment; as with love in Reiss's wheel theory (see chapter 4), the relationship continually intensifies. In addition, the commitment of partners to each other is often made public and visible to others. When others treat the two as a couple this heightens their sense of identity as a pair, since how people perceive themselves is largely due to how others see them (Goodman, 1985:73–116).

Pluralistic Ignorance. While dating, each partner is generally unsure of the depth of the commitment of the other person; Allport (1924) refers to this as *pluralistic ignorance.* One of the threads that runs through the dating process is the attempt to reduce pluralistic ignorance. Each partner looks for signs that the other is equally committed to the relationship. Courtship occurs when pluralistic ignorance has been eliminated and the status game of dating is no longer necessary.

Defining the Depth of Commitment. The funnel analogy has another use. The point at which the funnel becomes vertical is similar to an "inflection point" on a graph where a curve changes direction (see Fig. 6.1). In intimate relationships a similar inflection point is reached when the two people need to redefine the strength of their commitment to each other and to the relationship. Several factors affect this redefinition.

Discussions between the partners about their relationship redefine where it is going. Continued discussion about the relationship is typical of college students. They want to be sure of both their own and their partners' feelings.

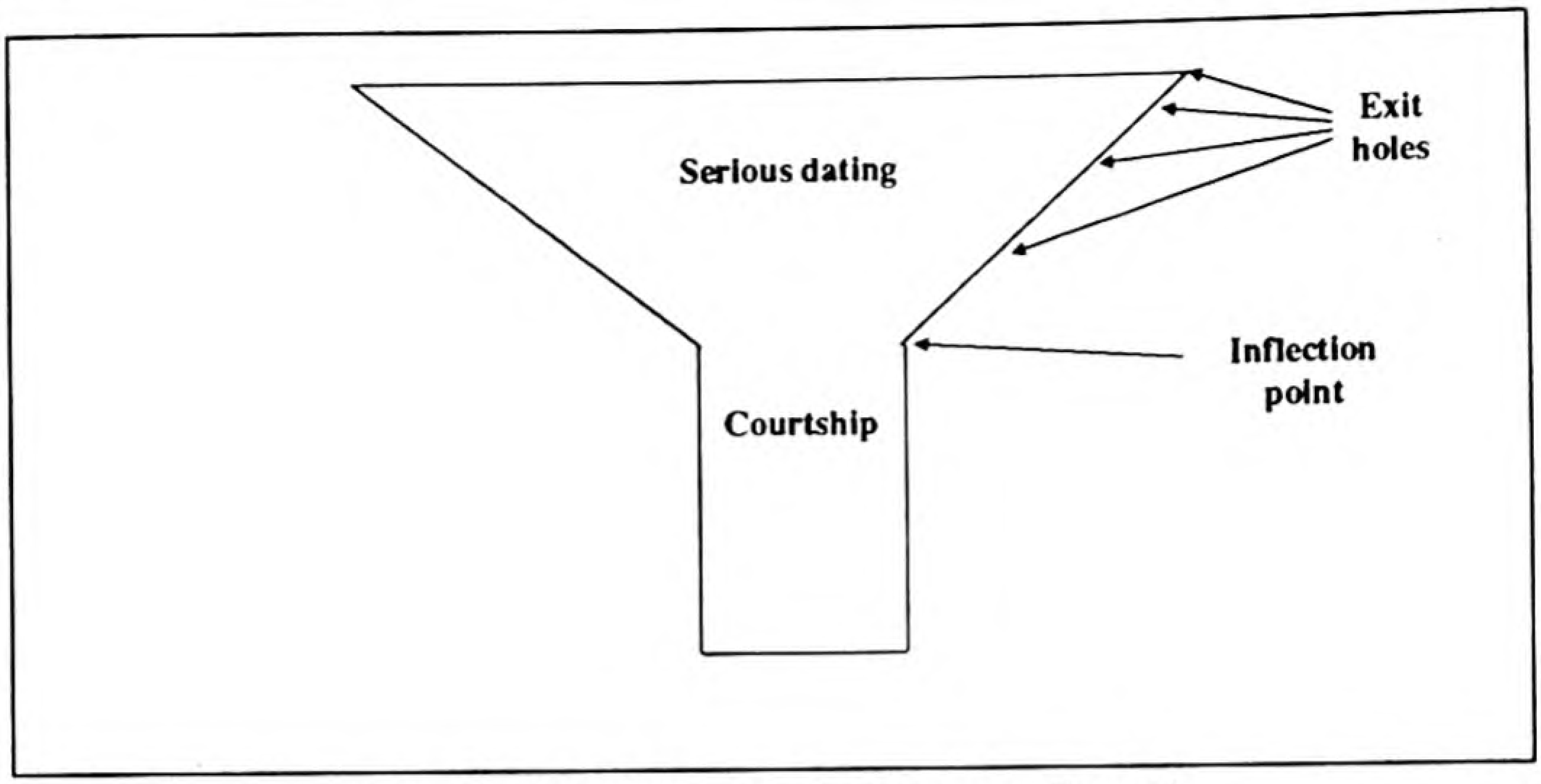

Fig. 6.1 The Courtship Process as a Funnel

Lovers' quarrels are arguments that lead couples to reassess their relationship. Such conflict often requires the two people to think through their commitment to the relationship and decide whether the conflict can be resolved, and if so, whether the effort to resolve it is worth the cost. In the course of this process the couple redefine their commitment, or lack of it, to the relationship.

Separations often provoke a review of a relationship. How long two people are separated and their activities as individuals during the separation clearly influence the nature of the relationship. However, any lengthy separation (for some, even the anticipation of one) is often a cause for reassessing the relationship.

Outside events sometimes require a couple to rethink their commitment. Pregnancy and parental intrusion are two possible outside events that lead a couple to clarify to themselves and perhaps to others how strongly they feel about each other.

The Creation of a Social Group

Courtship leads to the creation of what sociologists call a *social group*, two or more individuals who have a shared sense of identity and who interact with one another in structured ways on the basis of a common set of expectations about each other's behavior. The committed courtship couple is clearly a social group. Their shared sense of identity is evident in the special rapport they have with each other. They often feel a need to "objectify," to give concrete expression to, the special relationship they share. Couples frequently have pet names for each other, special places they call their own, his-and-her T-shirts, or anything that defines and makes concrete their special relationship. In short, there is a "pair unity" (Waller and Hill, 1951:189–190) created that stresses the rapport and togetherness of the couple.

When important others approve of the relationship, it is strengthened. These approving others often treat the two as a couple and this contributes to their common identity. However, when significant others disapprove of the relationship the results are more varied. For some couples, opposition, especially by parents, leads at least initially to what has been called the *Romeo and Juliet Effect*, the phenomenon in which parental disapproval increases a couple's affection for each other, at least initially (Belkin and Goodman, 1980:123). Despite this immediate banding together, the lack of support of significant others weakens the bonds of some couples over the long term.

Principle of Least Interest

The assumption in the preceding discussions is that the two people are equally committed to the relationship. Sometimes one of the partners is substantially more involved than the other. Waller (Waller and Hill, 1951: 190–192) termed this situation the *principle of least interest*, in which the person less committed to the relationship tends to dominate it. The less committed individuals can always threaten to leave the relationship if their desires are not met. The more committed partners are under pressure to meet these demands because the relationship means a great deal to them. A potentially exploitative situation may develop.

The reduction of pluralistic ignorance earlier in the relationship is one way to guard against this problem. For many, a truly imbalanced commitment often leads to the breakup of the relationship. But sometimes these exploitative relationships continue into marriage, carrying the same pattern into the new situation.

Cohabitation: A New Element in Courtship

Some form of cohabitation has long existed in the United States. In the 1920s Judge Ben Lindsey wrote an article in a popular magazine calling for "companionate marriages," a form of *cohabitation* in which two people live in an intimate, sexual relationship without being legally married. In the past few decades, cohabitation has become a routine step in the courtship process for many young people.

FREQUENCY

The number of cohabiting individuals has grown rapidly over the past two decades. In 1970, there were approximately 500,000 cohabiting couples; in 1988 there were 2.6 million, a fivefold increase in only twenty years. However, in 1988 cohabiting couples constituted only 5 percent of all American couples, up from a little over 4 percent in 1970 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988). Thus, though the increase has been dramatic, cohabiting couples are only a small fraction of American society.

CHARACTERISTICS

Cohabitation is mainly a short-term arrangement. Almost two-thirds of cohabitants do so for less than two years, and about one-third of all cohabitants eventually marry (Glick and Spanier, 1980). Cohabitants also tend to be relatively young; more than a quarter of them are under the age of twenty-five, and another approximately 40 percent are between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988: Table A-8). Cohabitants tend to live in the more cosmopolitan and diverse metropolitan regions of the West and Northeast, and to be more politically liberal and less religious than noncohabitants. While most cohabitants are white, the cohabitation *rate* for African-Americans is higher.

REASONS

In one of the early studies of cohabitation on a college campus (Macklin, 1972), respondents indicated that they cohabit because they are disillusioned with the competition and superficiality of dating and desire a meaningful intimate relationship. They saw cohabitation as a way of having a level of intimacy and companionship beyond what was possible through dating.

PATTERNS

Cohabitation varies. Atwater (1986), for example, distinguishes *courtship cohabitation*—a temporary interlude not necessarily leading to marriage—and *long-term premarital cohabitation*—a form of trial marriage to test its viability. Ridley, Peterman, and Avery (1978) describe several forms of cohabitation based on the presumed motivation for doing so.

Linus Blanket. This form of cohabitation, named for the *Peanuts* comic strip character, results from insecurity. The person needs a defined relationship to ward off a sense of loneliness and insecurity. The partner's identity is less important than his or her presence. Ridley and his colleagues report that this form of cohabitation tends to break down over the accumulated resentment of the stronger partner, who shoulders much of the burden of the relationship.

Emancipation. Here, cohabitation is used as a mechanism to achieve independence from parents. Ridley and his colleagues indicate that this form is frequently used by Catholic women seeking greater sexual freedom than is permitted by both their parents and their religion. This form also tends to be unstable because independence from parents, rather than the relationship itself, is the focus.

Convenience. This form tends to follow traditional gender role lines, with the man gaining sexual access and domestic support while the woman acquires companionship and possibly a marriage commitment. If the balance of positive gains becomes unequal this form may also be relatively unstable.

Testing. A trial marriage is another pattern of cohabitation. In this form, the two people essentially share what is a marital relationship without the legalities. Many use this experience to explore whether their intimate relationship will work before they take the formal step of marriage.

COHABITATION AND MARITAL STABILITY

Earlier research seems to indicate that cohabitants have a higher marital failure rate than noncohabitants. However, there are a number of factors to consider before one assumes that cohabitation leads to higher rates of marital failure.

Form of Cohabitation. There are various cohabiting patterns, some of which are more likely to be unstable than others. It is quite possible that there is a connection between marital failure and the form of cohabitation.

Cohabitants Tend to Be Less Traditional. Since they have less traditional family values, they are less likely to remain in an unhappy marriage. So it is not necessarily that cohabitation leads to more unhappy marriages, but that in unhappy marriages cohabitants are more likely to see and take a way out.

Time in a Relationship. Cohabitants who marry have been involved in a relationship longer than married couples who have not cohabited. Teachman and Polonka (1990) argue that the longer a cohabiting relationship exists without marriage, the greater is the possibility that it will fail. The research shows that when married couples who have cohabited are compared with those who have not, and the total length of time they have been in the relationship (including the cohabitation period) is the same, there is no difference in the marital failure rates. In short, the relationship between cohabitation and marital stability is not yet clear.

Dating evolved in American society during this century. From a sociological perspective, dating has a number of consequences—recreation, socialization, status among peers, and the selection of a marital partner. Typically, dating begins in a group and then evolves through double dating to casual and more committed individual relationships.

The traditional form of dating has been criticized as being a sexist, deceitful game, both superficial and anxiety producing. Today, dating is more informal, casual, and egalitarian. Dating practices differ by social class.

There are difficulties in initiating and terminating a dating relationship. Also, those who are physically attractive tend to be more successful in dating. People learn appropriate dating behavior from a variety of sources and experiences. Date rape has become an increasing problem, constituting about sixty percent of all reported rapes.

Courtship is an interactive process that is influenced by what has preceded it and what is expected in the future. The commitment of the two partners increases the longer the relationship continues and it becomes more difficult to exit; there is often a critical point in the relationship at which this level of commitment needs to be clarified. This clarification can occur through discussion, a lovers' quarrel, (anticipating) a reasonably long separation or intruding outside events.

Courtship essentially creates a social group. The subtle rapport and identity that exist between partners are often given concrete expression through pet names, shared places, and common clothing. When significant others approve, the relationship is strengthened. When they disapprove the results are more varied.

Sometimes relationships are unequal because one partner is more deeply committed than the other. This principle of least interest permits the less committed person to dominate and exploit the relationship.

Cohabitation has become an increasingly important element in courtship. While the number of cohabiting couples has increased rapidly over the past twenty years, they still constitute a small percentage of American households. Cohabitants are typically young, liberal, and live in metropolitan regions of the West and Northeast. Cohabitants are often seeking a meaningful intimate relationship without the superficialities of dating. There are various forms that cohabitation takes, from a guarantee of security to testing a potential marriage relationship. While there has been some research showing that cohabitants have a higher marital failure rate than noncohabitants, those studies have been challenged recently on several grounds.

7

Partner Choice

Choosing a marital partner is limited by both social and personal considerations. The former include social norms defining the pool of eligible partners and the nature of the "marriage market." This chapter will discuss the social and personal factors leading to the selection of a marital partner.

THE FIELD OF ELIGIBLES

The creation of a field of eligible marriage partners using the rules of endogamy and exogamy was discussed and illustrated in chapter 2. Endogamy defines the outer limits of acceptable partners, and exogamy excludes from this pool a limited number of people, generally close family members and those of the same sex. These two regulations affect the process of selecting a marriage partner. Within these constraints there is a variety of other social and personal factors that influence a person's choice.

THE MARRIAGE MARKET

Several investigators have pointed out that the choice of a marital partner takes place within a "marriage market." As with any market, there is a particular commodity or item to be exchanged for something of value. The commodity in this market is an eligible marriage partner, and the exchange value involves some desired attribute(s). Attributes may be social, such as social class background, or personal. Negotiating or bargaining over these exchanges is what fuels the marriage market. In traditional societies where marriages are arranged, these negotiations are carried out by the family. In American society, with its system of conjugal courtship, the two parties are themselves primarily responsible for dealing with the market.

Bargaining and Exchange Theory

Bargaining for a marital partner in a marriage market is best understood in terms of *exchange theory*, a theory of human behavior which argues that the creation or maintenance of relationships depends on the balance of costs and benefits involved. This view assumes that people's behavior is governed by a *hedonistic calculus* in which they attempt to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. In economic terms they attempt to strike the best bargain they can for their commodity—in the present instance, an eligible marriage partner.

Blau (1964) has argued that not all people see human relationships in such strict economic terms. There are social constraints on the bargaining process, e.g., people are not expected to cheat or lie. Furthermore, feelings of affection and love restrict a simple cost/benefit analysis of relationships. However, some modified form of exchange theory has been useful in examining partner selection within a marriage market.

TRADITIONAL EXCHANGE IN THE MARRIAGE MARKET

Under conditions of traditional gender roles the bargaining process was relatively simple and straightforward. The woman exchanged her ability to provide sexual gratification, children, and domestic service for the man's ability to provide protection, status, and economic support. However, for those marrying young, the man was in a much better position to assess his potential wife's actual attributes; the value of his attributes was often in his *future* potential. A woman marrying after the man had established himself had a much better basis for judging the equality of the exchange.

CONTEMPORARY EXCHANGE PRACTICES

The changing nature of gender roles in the United States has influenced the way in which bargaining for a marital partner takes place. Substantial numbers of women are in the work force and do not require a man to provide them with economic support and social status. Also, the increased acceptance of sexual activity outside of marriage has made this factor less of a bargaining chip in the contemporary marriage market.

While substantial inequalities still exist between men and women, the differences have recently been narrowed. Consequently, the bargaining that currently takes place in the marriage market has changed. Women now have more attributes of their own, such as economic contributions and social status, to offer in the exchange. The greater emphasis on egalitarian marriage has led to an assessment of men's expressive attributes—their warmth, emotional expressiveness, companionship, and ability to satisfy their wive's sexual needs—as contributions to the bargaining process.

On the other hand, women's traditional assets in the bargaining process do not carry as much weight today. Domestic services are readily available commercially; restaurants, food delivery establishments, microwave frozen dinners, tailors, and cleaning services are easily accessible. The greater acceptability of nonmarital sexuality reduces the value of another traditional bargaining chip for women. However, the increasing acceptance of marriage as an equal relationship has affected the way people think about the marriage market. More and more people look for partners with the individual characteristics they would like rather than accepting predetermined traditional gender role characteristics.

The marriage market is in some respects like a bazaar, where goods for sale are available at various stalls or counters and people move from one to the other looking for what they want. Individuals move through dates and relationships seeking the partner who has the attributes they desire and are attracted by what they have to offer. Some offers may be tendered, but not wanted. Some may not be reciprocated by the desired other. Eventually, most people find the bargain they want, or at least one they can live with.

The Marriage Gradient

Equality is not always achieved in the bargaining process. Occasionally someone marries a partner who offers less than he or she receives. When this imbalance involves socioeconomic status, students of the family refer to it as the *marriage gradient*. This mismatch can take two different forms, hypergamy and hypogamy.

DIFFERENT FORMS

Hypergamy. This form refers to women marrying men who have a higher social class position than they do. In American society this has been the more common form. Men have often been willing to trade their higher social position for the physical attractiveness of women (Elder, 1969), and in addition men have more flexibility, since their social status depends largely on their own accomplishments. A woman's status, on the other hand, often depends upon the status of the man she marries (Davis and Robinson, 1988).

Hypogamy. This practice involves women marrying men of lower social class status. This is a less frequent practice than hypergamy since presumably men's main attribute in the marriage market is their social standing. Since a woman's position is generally tied to that of her husband, hypogamy would lower her social status.

The prevalence of hypergamy reduces the available market for women of high social standing. They are by and large limited to men at their own level. Women of lower status have both men at their level and those above them as likely marriage partners. The reverse situation occurs for men. Those of higher standing have more opportunities than those lower in the social scale; the upper-status men have available to them women of equal or lower status, while lower-status men are restricted to women at their own level. On a college campus, with class year an important attribute, the preference for hypergamy confers significant advantages to senior men and freshman women. The issue of the marriage gradient also plays a role in intergroup dating and marriage, and will be discussed below.

The Marriage Squeeze

Two social factors that affect the marriage market are age and birthrate. Though more boys are born than girls, the sex ratio is about equal by the age at which most people marry in the United States. If partners were the same age when they married, the men and women in each *cohort* (all people born in a single year) would each have a potential marriage partner. However, women prefer to marry men who are a few years older than they are (see Table 7.1). If the cohorts involved were about the same size this differential age preference would have no effect on marriage opportunities. On the other hand, when there are major changes in the size of the different cohorts, a *marriage squeeze* occurs and there is a mismatch between the number of eligible men (age twenty to twenty-six) and women (age eighteen to twenty-four) as marital partners.

Year	Men	Women	Difference
1890	26.1	22.0	4.1
1910	25.1	21.6	3.5
1930	24.3	21.3	3.0
1950	22.8	20.3	2.5
1970	23.2	23.9	3.8

Table 7.1 Median Age of Men and Women at First Marriage in the United States from 1890–1990. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990a., Current Population Report, Series P, 202–450, P. 1

If there is a sustained rise in the birthrate, as there was during the "baby boom" following World War II, there will be more young women reaching marriageable age about twenty years later than there are available men who are a few years older at that time. Glick and Norton (1977) estimate that as a consequence of the baby boom the number of women of marriageable age exceeded the number of eligible men by about five to ten percent during the 1960s and 1970s. If, however, the birthrate declines the squeeze will be felt more by men. Consequently, the drop in the birthrate during the 1960s resulted in a marriage squeeze for men coming of age in the 1980s, as it will for those of marriageable age in the 1990s.

As a result of the marriage squeeze, the age differential between spouses and the age at first marriage will likely change. If the men now facing the marriage squeeze seek women more than three or four years younger, they will increase the age difference between marriage partners and decrease the age at first marriage for women. Men do not generally choose women their age or older. The only other alternative is for a considerable number of young men to forgo marriage altogether.

FACTORS LEADING TO PARTNER SELECTION

Several factors influence the selection of a marriage partner. Some of these are determined by the social environment and others by personal choice. Both affect the eventual selection of a mate.

Availability and Residential Propinquity

For a number of years, it was clear that *residential propinquity* was a major factor in who married whom. Given the high degree of residential segregation in American society, especially several decades ago, those living near one another were likely to be similar in social background and values. Further, geographical closeness meant that less time and energy needed to be exerted to meet and court a marital partner.

Today, changed lifestyles have substantially reduced the importance of residential propinquity in partner selection. The vast numbers of personal automobiles and improvements in public transportation have given people considerably more mobility than previously. Moreover, many people now work and vacation at some distance from their homes and thus are more likely to meet potential partners in these places. The increasing number of young people attending college away from home has also considerably widened opportunities for meeting possible mates.

Availability, rather than residential propinquity, is the key element in the partner selection process today. While people cannot become potential mates if they never meet, they do have to go beyond availability and explore their fit with one another as potential lifetime partners.

Eligibility

Certain characteristics are desired in marital partners. These attributes include both social background factors and personal traits.

ENDOGAMY: SIMILAR SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS

Endogamy has been defined as the external boundary of acceptable marriage partners. More specifically endogamy refers to the societal preference for marriage between people who are sociologically similar. In American society this translates into a preference that people marry within their own race, religion, ethnic group, and social class. Most people do just that. The frequency of interracial marriage is quite low, about two percent of all marriages. While interreligious marriages are more frequent than those between races, they, too, are relatively infrequent. Though marriages between religions vary substantially by geographical location, they are estimated to be about fifteen to twenty percent of all marriages (Glenn, 1982). Exact estimates of marriages across ethnic and class lines are more difficult to attain, but they too are not the dominant pattern.

Similarity in social background makes it more likely that two people will share similar values and orientation to life. In essence endogamy serves as a gross initial sorting mechanism to avoid obvious mismatches. By itself, however, it is insufficient. Even among those of similar backgrounds, there exists a wide variety of values and lifestyles. Matching on a more personal level is required.

HOMOGAMY OR HETEROGAMY: PERSONAL SIMILARITY OR DIFFERENCE?

There is no difference in views among scholars about the importance of endogamous mate selection. However, a key question in the study of partner selection on the basis of personal attributes has been—do "birds of a feather flock together" (*homogamy*) or do "opposites attract" (*heterogamy*)?

Heterogamy. The view that there are differences in the personality characteristics of potential mates is primarily supported by the work of Winch (1958). While agreeing that mate selection is primarily endogamous he argues that people also select a partner whose personality complements theirs. That is, they choose mates who have personality traits that they lack and need to "complete" themselves (called the *theory of complementary needs*). Winch's theory asserts that a dominant person will marry a submissive person. This view has not been substantiated by the relevant research (e.g., Murstein, 1976).

Homogamy. However, it appears that similarity in personal characteristics plays a more important a role in the partner selection process. With due allowance for some individual variation, people generally select mates who have similar levels of intelligence and education, and who share a similar outlook on life as well as social values. Though occasionally a politically conservative man will marry a strongly liberal women, this is the exception and not the rule. People also marry those of roughly the same age. A substantial age difference between partners usually raises questions in the minds of others as to why the two married.

Interestingly, homogamy also seems to take place on the basis of physical characteristics. Tall men tend to marry tall women, thin men tend to marry thin women, and handsome men tend to marry attractive women (McKillip and Riedel, 1983). Though exceptions to these general practices exist, they do not occur often.

In short, the substantial body of research on partner selection clearly indicates that endogamy and homogamy overwhelmingly prevail. But the choice of mate does not occur at a single point in time. Any attempt to explain mate selection must account for its development over time; Murstein's (1976) theory does just that.

HOMOGAMY AS A PROCESS

Successive Filters. Murstein (1976) has examined partner selection as a fluid and dynamic process that proceeds through a series of successive "filters." This approach is called the *Stimulus-Value-Role Theory* (*S-V-R*, for short). The argument contends that different factors are important at different stages in intimate relationships.

The *stimulus value* of a potential partner is important at the beginning of a relationship. If a person is physically attractive and is liked by the individual's significant others, these are good reasons to continue the relationship; the partner has "stimulus value." At this stage the reaction to the other involves initial impressions rather than detailed knowledge. The attraction is largely on the basis of external factors. If there is no initial attraction the other has no stimulus value, and the relationship is unlikely to develop further. If, however, the two people are attracted to one another the relationship needs to develop further.

The *value comparison* stage goes beyond superficial impressions. The view of the other person is based on intimate interaction between them. Communication between the two is a key component, and discussions between them reveal much about each other's values and to what extent these are shared. Couples who find they have little in common, Murstein argues, are unlikely to maintain their relationship. If, however, they discover they share many of their basic values, they are likely to draw closer to each other.

The *role* stage serves to test each partner's ability to function within the roles of the relationship and its perceived goal of marriage. Each looks for qualities in the other that they perceive to be appropriate for a marital partner. The other is no longer just a date or a good friend, but someone who will possibly be a spouse; this new role calls for different characteristics than those enjoyed earlier in the relationship.

Murstein argues that the strength of a relationship depends on both partners giving to the other as well as receiving, called the *principle of equity*. This mutual exchange should be roughly equivalent.

Reciprocal Attraction

The attraction between two people is a very personal thing. There are many factors that lead to one person "turning on" another. People resonate with some people but not others. Why?

ELEMENTS OF RECIPROCAL ATTRACTION

Personal Characteristics. People learn to like some personal characteristics in other people and to dislike others. Standards of beauty affect people differently. Some are attracted to people who are assertive and outgoing, while others prefer partners who are more restrained and inward looking. Some like those who are emotionally expressive, while others prefer people who are more low-key. In short, people take into account both the actions and appearance of others in assessing their value as potential marriage partners. Since few people have all of the positive qualities a person might want in another person, each individual must often judge which characteristics are the most important. Most people have a reasonable understanding of those personal qualities of others that they like, what we have called the other's "stimulus value."

Values and Interests. People generally prefer to marry those who share their basic values. This includes not only political but also social values. The need for honesty in business, the role of religion in everyday life, the importance of egalitarian family decision making, and relevance of children to family happiness are some of the values that are important to couples contemplating marriage.

A similarity of interests also contributes to reciprocal attraction. Do both people like music and, if so, what kind? Do they share an interest in sports? As a participant or as a spectator? Do they enjoy a quiet evening alone together? Do they like to travel? These are among the specific interests on which many couples will base their common life. Through the dating and courtship process people find out to what extent these interests are shared by potential marital partners.

Responsiveness. Most people have a fairly good sense of the personal qualities, values, and interests they possess and which they look for in others. People occasionally find themselves responsive to some partners who have the characteristics they desire, but unresponsive to others with similar attributes. An indefinable quality often makes some individuals more attractive than others; this "chemistry" is not always rational and has eluded scientific analysis. Some people just "feel right," while others do not. Perhaps future research will explain this aspect of attraction, or perhaps the mystery will remain unsolved.

INTERGROUP CHOICE: SPECIAL CASES OF NONENDOGAMOUS SELECTION

Though the choice of a marital partner is generally endogamous, intermarriage does occur. Two prominent examples are interracial and interreligious partner choice.

Interracial Partner Selection

Historically, forty states have had *antimiscegenation laws* that prohibited marriage between people of different races. Pennsylvania was the first state to repeal its law in 1780. On June 12, 1967, the United States Supreme Court struck down the antimiscegenation laws in the sixteen states in which they still were in force.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERRACIAL PARTNER SELECTION

Frequency. Since the Supreme Court ruling there has been a substantial increase in interracial marriages. Between 1970 and 1987 the number of such marriages doubled (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989). However, the actual frequency of racial intermarriage is quite small, under two percent of all marriages. While many people think of interracial marriage solely in terms of whites and African Americans, this combination accounts for under a quarter of all such relationships.

Social Characteristics. Interracial couples tend to marry at slightly later ages than those marrying within their race (Wilson, 1984). African Americans who marry someone of another race tend to have higher levels of education than those who do not; however, members of other races who intermarry have lower levels of education than those who do not. In marriages between whites and African Americans, about two-thirds of the couples consist of an African American husband and a white wife. Intermarriages involving a Japanese or Filipino spouse show the reverse pattern; for Chinese or Native- American spouses, the ratios are about equal.

Various explanations have been offered for these particular patterns of interracial marriage. For example, power; a relationship between a white man and an African-American woman need not lead to marriage because of white men's power in American society. However, relationships between African-American men and white women can only be sanctioned through marriage (Merton, 1941). A number of investigators (e.g., Pavela, 1964) did not find empirical support for this view, and alternative theories have been offered. Porterfield (1978) stresses the importance of cultural ideals of beauty, while Hooks (1980) focuses on the effects of the devaluation of African-American womanhood in American society. To date, however, there is no generally accepted single explanation for the differential frequency of the various forms of interracial marriage.

Reasons. There is no single reason why people select marital partners of a different race. Basically, those who marry interracially are in love with their partners just as are those who select partners from their own race. Porterfield (1978) also points out six additional reasons why people may marry interracially.

Nonconformity to endogamous norms is one reason people may marry interracially. They wish to point out that not everyone has to conform to society's dictates.

Idealism motivates some to select a partner from another race. They believe restrictions on marrying within their race are a cultural prejudice that should not be fostered.

The "*lure of the exotic*" explains some interracial marriages. Some people are fascinated with others who are different, and this difference creates the kind of attraction that leads to an intimate bond.

Rebellion against parental authority is dramatically highlighted through interracial marriage. Such an action stakes out a person's independence and autonomy more than perhaps any other act.

Repudiation of a person's own racial group may be another reason for interracial marriage. This is especially likely if people do not feel accepted by or integrated into their social group.

Neurotic self-hate or self-degradation is an extreme but possible reason. Some people may use marriage to a social inferior as a way of punishing themselves.

Consequences. Interracial couples experience less social support than do those who marry within their race, and often suffer more emotional turmoil. They also tend to have more difficulty finding an appropriate residence, have less affectionate ties with relatives, and endure more negative social response to their relationship. Moreover, the children of these marriages have been found to have an ambiguous and confused sense of identity.

Interracial marriages are more likely to end in divorce than intraracial marriages between whites. However, interracial marriages between African-Americans and whites have a lower divorce rate than marriages between two African-Americans; and a marriage between an African-American man and a white woman has less chance of ending up in divorce than marriages between two whites (Monahan, 1970). Several factors may explain the generally lower rates of marital stability for interracial marriages. First, these marriages are more likely to occur between unconventional people who are not strictly bound by traditional social norms. They are probably less likely to stay in an unhappy situation and more likely to divorce as the marriage turns sour.

Second, a couple with background differences is less likely to share values and interests to the same extent as couples who are similar. Third, practical difficulties may arise from unsupportive or overtly racist co-workers. Fourth, finding a suitable residence in a tolerant community may place additional strains on the marriage. Finally, the non-traditional nature of these marriages makes it more difficult for the people to find appropriate support networks in times of crisis.

Interreligious Partner Selection

Although infrequent, marriage between partners of different religions is more common than interracial marriages. All major religions have generally been opposed to such marriages. Roman Catholics used to be threatened with *excommunication*, denial of the sacraments of the Church, if they married outside of their religion. Though Pope Paul VI in 1970 ended the requirement that couples sign a written agreement not to use contraception and to raise their children as Roman Catholics, the Catholic partner in an interreligious marriage still must promise to protect his or her faith and that of the children.

Jewish prohibitions against interreligious marriage date back to the Bible. However, the threat to Jewish existence by the *Holocaust* sensitized American Jews to a potential danger of eliminating the group through intermarriage. The Protestant religion is quite diverse and is generally less hierarchically organized than Roman Catholicism and less tightly knit than Judaism. Still, the various Protestant denominations have generally opposed interreligious marriages as being more unstable and because they may dilute or divert the religious upbringing of the children.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERRELIGIOUS PARTNER SELECTION

Frequency. As indicated earlier, approximately 15 to 20 percent of all marriages are between partners of different religions. However, more recent studies suggest an increase in interfaith marriages. What is interesting is that the rate of intermarriage is still considerably less than what would have been predicted based on the number of available marital partners from the same religion. In one systematic study (Glenn, 1982), Protestants had a 7 percent intermarriage rate, Roman Catholics an 18 percent rate, and Jews a 12 percent rate. However, there are large variations by region due to available opportunities for intragroup marriage.

Social Characteristics. Among Jews it is more likely that men will intermarry; among Roman Catholics, women. Interreligious marriage seems to be more common among those who are remarrying than those marrying for the first time (Rosenthal, 1970). Furthermore, intermarriage has been more frequently practiced among those of lower socioeconomic status and by those who are either significantly younger or significantly older than the typical marriage age when they first wed (Burchinal and Chancellor, 1962).

Reasons. Several reasons have been offered for entering into interfaith marriages, including some similar to those for intrareligious marriages. Others are similar to those suggested as explanations of interracial marriages: unconventionality, rebellion against parents, novelty, and a lack of integration into a person's own social group. The number of eligible partners from within the same religion must also be considered; as this number dwindles, people may choose a partner from a different religion out of a lack of opportunity to do otherwise.

Consequences. Interfaith marriages have fewer identifiable consequences than interracial marriages. The lack of visible signs of intermarriage compared with those between races generally results in less overt negative public reaction. However, those wishing to be married by a member of the clergy will often have to search for one who is willing to perform such a ceremony; these numbers are not extensive within Judaism and Roman Catholicism.

Problems of meshing two sets of religious beliefs and practices are not uncommon in interfaith marriages. The problems are especially notable when the couple has children. The decision about which religion, if any, the children will be raised in often adds strain to these marriages. This difficulty occurs even if there has been a prior agreement.

Marriages between people of different religions have slightly lower rates of marital stability than intrafaith marriages (Heaton, Albrecht, and Martin, 1985). Not only is their divorce rate slightly higher, but they apparently have lower levels of marital satisfaction (Ortega, Whitt, and Wilson, 1988). These two factors may be related; "unconventional" people who enter into an intermarriage may be more likely to divorce if they are not satisfied than those choosing a marital partner more traditionally.

Marriage partners are chosen in a "market" in which there is a socially defined field of eligible potential mates. Historically, bargaining for a partner followed traditional gender role lines—the man traded his economic position and ability to provide protection for the woman's ability to provide children, satisfy his sexual needs, and render domestic service. Today, substantially more equality between men and women has led to an exchange more in terms of interpersonal characteristics and other skills.

In American society most marriages take place between status equals. However, when this does not occur, hypergamy is more common than hypogamy. When the birthrate rises, as it did after World War II, the marriage squeeze makes it more difficult for women to find an eligible man. The reverse occurs if the birthrate declines, as it did in the 1960s.

Other factors affecting partner selection include availability of partners as well as social and personal "fit." Once limited to residential propinquity, availability bases have been broadened by changes in transportation and *higher education. By and large, partners are selected on the basis of endogamy and homogamy. Two relatively infrequent exceptions to endogamous mate selection are interracial and interreligious partner selection. Interracial couples experience more difficulties than those marrying within their race, which results in a higher divorce rate.*

Interreligious marriages constitute from 15 to 20 percent of all marriages. Because the differences between partners are not as visible, interreligious marriages have fewer problems than interracial marriages. However, they also share some similarities. Many of the reasons for marrying are the same, as are the lower rates of marital happiness and slightly higher divorce rates. Finally, the lack of eligible partners within people's religion increases the likelihood of interfaith marriages.

8

The Transition to Marriage

People marry for many reasons. Whatever their reasons, the transition from being single to being married is complex. Engagement is a key element in this process and is considerably different from dating and courtship. The wedding involves rituals, legal aspects, and generally substantial costs. After the wedding most couples have a honeymoon, which is both a short trip and a special period at the beginning of marriage. This chapter discusses all of these transitional events.

WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO MARRY

The decision to marry often involves a combination of factors. Several are typically involved for most people (Knox, 1975).

Socially Acceptable Reasons

LOVE

In American society, love is the most frequent reason people give for wanting to marry; whatever other reasons they offer, most people include romantic love as an element in the decision to marry. They believe with Kieffer (1977: 281) that "no other living arrangement yet devised [other than marriage] has provided so well for so many personal needs and desires of so many individuals, males and females." The need for affection and intimacy embodied in notions of love seems to be met in marriage more than in any other way. In short, it is a rare marriage in the United States that is not based at least in part on feelings of love.

COMPANIONSHIP

Companionship is another important element in the decision to marry. Most people have learned the importance of sharing ideas, feelings, experiences, and affection with others. Companionship provides warmth and security for most people, whether it is in a nuclear family or a peer group. Marriage provides an intimate form of companionship that most people see as desirable.

SENSE OF READINESS

Dating and courtship are ongoing processes. For some the decision to marry results from a feeling that they are ready, that they have been well prepared for the long-term commitment that marriage requires. They may have postponed this decision until other goals have been attained, but at some point they feel ready to marry.

THE "THING TO DO"

Americans are taught that marriage is the natural outgrowth of the dating and courtship process in which they are involved. Marriage is perceived as the natural next step to adulthood.

LEGITIMATION OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Despite the fact that society is much more permissive today, marriage carries with it the only social sanction for sexual activity. Thus marriage makes the satisfaction of sexual needs easier and more socially acceptable.

LEGITIMIZATION OF CHILDREN

Society has become slightly more tolerant of children born outside of marriage. However, acceptance of childbearing without being married depends on the particular community, peer group, and family. Furthermore, children born within marriage are automatically granted legitimate status and have a clearly accepted social identity.

Less Socially Acceptable Reasons

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Most Americans take a less positive view of people who marry either for economic security or for economic advancement. In the latter case, marrying the boss's daughter to get a better job or to advance up the corporate ladder is not typically seen as a worthy reason. However, there is less stigma attached to a divorced mother who marries a man to provide security for her and her young children.

REBELLION AGAINST PARENTS

This factor was discussed as a reason why some people engage in intermarriage. It is also the reason some young people marry within as well as outside of their social group. It is a way of establishing independence and autonomy in the face of parental opposition.

REBOUND

Some people choose to marry shortly after an earlier serious intimate relationship breaks up; they marry on the rebound. Such a relationship often runs into difficulty because it is centered on a response to the loss of a previous relationship rather than on the characteristics of the new one.

PREMARITAL PREGNANCY

While less necessary today, some people marry to legitimize the birth of a child conceived in a premarital pregnancy. While such a marriage is not always doomed to failure, premarital pregnancy is generally considered an inadequate basis on its own for a long-lasting relationship.

OTHER FACTORS

Some people marry because of the physical attractiveness of their partners, to escape an unhappy situation, out of loneliness or pity or because of extensive social pressure. In each of these cases the reason for marrying does not result from the establishment of an intimate relationship that the partners believe will bring them long-term pleasure and satisfaction; consequently, it is less likely to provide the strong bond needed to weather the inevitable difficulties that marriage entails (see chapter 11). Thus, marriages based on these reasons are likely to be less stable (Glick and Norton, 1977).

ENGAGEMENT

At some point in the courtship process two people decide to get married. The decision to marry is called *betrothal* and occurs in many societies. In the United States it is called *engagement*, and usually involves a public declaration of that commitment and the bestowal of a ring by the man on the woman. An engagement is one of the activities that establish, maintain, and deepen an intimate relationship. The public announcement is a remnant of the historical form of "posting the banns." While intended to provide community support for the marriage, the banns also allowed community members to bring any objection they might have to the marriage.

Functions of the Engagement

PUBLIC DEFINITION OF A CHANGE IN SOCIAL STATUS

The public nature of engagement signals a change in social status and identity for a couple. It says to the world that two individuals are now to be treated as a couple. In any gathering of family or friends, they are now both to be invited.

The public nature of engagement attracts the attention of those whose business relates to weddings and married couples. The newly engaged pair will be courted by florists, catering halls, photography studios, and other similar establishments.

These two consequences of being engaged are more important than they might seem. Each in a different way conveys social support for the couple's changed identity and status. Being treated as a couple by friends and family contributes to the strengthening of the bond between two people. The attention from the wedding and marriage tradespeople adds to their sense of what changes lie ahead.

"RECOVERY" FROM DATING AND COURTSHIP

Despite the changes in dating and courtship that have taken place recently, there is still an element of uncertainty and sport in the process. Engagement settles these concerns for most couples. It removes doubt about the commitment of the other; there is little or no pluralistic ignorance about the relationship. The anxiety that doubts engendered is reduced, even eliminated. Also eliminated are attempts by partners to further the relationship by presenting idealized facets of their selves to the other.

In short, engagement brings a greater level of security to the relationship and changes the tone of the tie between the two people. At least initially, the relationship should be more relaxed than it was earlier.

ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION FOR MARRIAGE

The new status of "about to be married" leads couples to act increasingly as if they are already married. This practice at playing elements of future roles is called *anticipatory socialization*. Much like young children engaging in playing house, the engaged couple learns aspects of marital roles in this way.

FINAL TEST PERIOD FOR THE RELATIONSHIP

Engagement is a "dress rehearsal" for marriage. The public commitment is made, people treat the two as a couple, each looks to the long-term nature of the relationship, and anticipatory socialization approximates some aspects of the actual marriage relationship. The increasing tendency for many young people to cohabit during this period adds to its similarity to marriage. The kinds of adjustments and joint actions to be discussed allow the two people to get a substantial sense of what it would be like to be married to each other. Changes in style and substance can still be made in the relationship, or alternatively it may become clear that this marriage will not work out well.

Processes During Engagement

INCREASED IDENTITY INVESTMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP

Engagement becomes for many couples the defining feature of who they are; their identity is invested in this new relationship. Increasingly they refer to "we" rather than "I." In fact, sensitive counselors who work with engaged and married couples listen carefully to whether their clients refer to themselves in the singular or the plural as a clue to the nature of the bond between them.

Relationships that are likely to succeed require a balance in identity investment. Total commitment of a person's identity to the relationship is too constricting for personal growth and contrary to most contemporary views of engagement and marriage. On the other hand, lack of substantial commitment to the relationship indicates either a weak relationship or one characterized by the principle of least interest. Thus, substantial commitment *both* to the relationship and to oneself as an individual is necessary. This allows sufficient investment of time and energy in the relationship and in those things each individual needs for personal development.

PLAYING THE "ABOUT TO BE MARRIED" ROLE

During the engagement period the couple may start to take many of the actions necessary to plan their joint life. They often establish a joint bank account and make joint decisions about finances. They discuss where they will live after marriage and in what type of residence. Many begin exploring suitable apartments or houses and some even start looking for furniture.

Discussions between couples about how they will relate to in-laws are not uncommon. The discussion about whether to have children is likely to have come up before, but at this time there may be more serious discussion of this factor. For couples who plan to be parents, this consideration is often tied to whether both partners will work and, if so, how the desire for children will be accommodated. The division of household responsibilities is often another issue that the engaged couple faces at this time.

The sexual side of marriage is also part of many discussions between engaged couples. Even for those who do not cohabit, the topic of sex is often an important element in their anticipatory socialization to marriage.

To conclude, after engagement the range of typical activities of married couples becomes the focus of the pair. They take part in some of these activities in an initial way or at least discuss their relevance to the forthcoming marital relationship. However, these initial discussions and actions and tentative decisions may well change after marriage. For example, a couple may plan for both partners to work for a few years before they have a child, but surprise pregnancy or a career requirement may force a revision in earlier plans.

ACCOMMODATION AND COMPROMISE

Perhaps the most important aspect of any successful intimate relationship is the ability of partners to engage in accommodation and compromise.

Accommodation. This refers to the couple's ability to function despite underlying differences. In all relationships there are likely to be differences that are not easily or even necessarily resolvable. Accommodation permits the couple to put these differences aside, at least temporarily, so the relationship can continue. For example, in an interfaith relationship if neither partner wishes to engage in the religious activities of the other, both can agree to avoid all religious activities. They set religion aside so that the relationship can continue. In many situations accommodation is only possible temporarily. But even a delay in facing a difference may result in a situation that permits a resolution not possible earlier.

Compromise. On the other hand, compromise involves an agreement whereby each of the partners gives up something in order to continue the relationship. For example, if each partner is more comfortable socializing with his or her own friends than with those of the other, a simple compromise would involve alternating social events with his friends and her friends.

All relationships, and in fact all of social life, require accommodation and compromise. Different interests and desires always exist between people involved in a common enterprise; rarely do people get their own way continually in these circumstances. The more intimate the nature of the relationship between two people, the more necessary it is that they learn how to adjust to one another's interests and needs; accommodation and compromise are the major mechanisms through which this is accomplished.

DEVELOPING PREDICTABLE RESPONSE PATTERNS

As people get to know each other better they establish deeper communication patterns. They become better able to understand how their partner thinks, feels, and is likely to act (Goodman and Ofshe, 1968). This process of understanding is accelerated during engagement because of the couple's increasing interaction and openness with one another. Their sharing of daily routines exposes them to the views of each other, and their planning of a common future leads them to reveal more and more facets of themselves.

Difficulties of the Engagement

EFFECTS OF BEING "ACCESSIBLE"

The increasing intimacy and accessibility of the partners to each other make them more vulnerable. The more they reveal about themselves, the more likely this is to expose some negative or less desirable aspect of themselves. This may be a cause for concern or for difficulty during periods of stress.

PROBLEMS AND FRUSTRATIONS

All intimate relationships involve some problems and frustrations. For example, no two people remain static. One person may grow while the other remains stagnant, or stuck in the past. Furthermore, the relationship exists within a social context that is also changing and may affect the partners differently. The movement for equality between the sexes, for example, may have greater influence on the woman than the man—and this may be a source of problems.

The tensions that typically increase as the wedding day nears also create problems. Despite the obvious pleasure most couples take in their wedding, planning for it is often a stressful event. Moreover, as the marriage date approaches many people become anxious about their choice. It is natural for doubts to arise at this point and to infect the relationship with anxiety and stress.

All close relationships experience problems independent of the traits of the two people involved. However, problems can be created by the characteristics of one or both of the partners. For example, one partner may be envious of the occupational or social success of the other and because of these feelings behave in ways that damage the relationship. It is important in any intimate relationship to try to separate these two types of problems. Those that are intrinsic to any intimate relationship usually require some form of joint adjustment (e.g., accommodation or compromise). However, problems that arise from the unique characteristics of one or both of the partners require more focused individual change.

CONSEQUENCES

Increasing difficulties often lead the couple to question whether the relationship should be continued. There are several possible ways of dealing with these concerns.

Eloping. Running away to marry, usually without the presence of family or friends, is one way of handling the accumulating frustration—particularly those that arise from planning the wedding. Elopement is often not an effective solution since the problems and frustrations are left untouched and may weaken the marriage.

Breaking the Engagement. Another not uncommon solution is to break the engagement. Even during the traditional 1940s and 1950s, Burgess and Wallin (1953) have reported that between one-third and one-half of their respondents had broken an engagement. Landis and Landis (1973) found that broken relationships were more common (about three-fourths of all breakups) in informal engagements based on private rather than public understandings. The value of this solution depends on whether the relationship is really unsalvageable. This judgment requires considerable insight on the part of the couple and, perhaps, professional help.

Working Through the Problems. Dealing with the problems of the engagement is another solution, and one that often leads to successful marriages. The issue is less that the problems have been resolved than that a framework has been established for dealing with problems. Burgess and Wallin (1944) found such a relationship between adjustment in engagement and adjustment in marriage.

Continuing an Unsatisfying Relationship. Carrying a poor engagement into marriage is another possible outcome. Some engaged couples never resolve their problems and frustrations, keep the relationship going, and end up with a similar conflict-ridden marriage. If the problems are not resolved in the marriage, the relationship is likely to fall apart.

THE WEDDING

In all societies, couples marry in some type of wedding ceremony. In American society, the overwhelming majority of marriages involve a formal wedding ceremony and a formal reception. Despite the variation in style, wedding ceremonies in all societies share similar sociological significance.

Sociological Functions

EMPHASIZES THE SERIOUSNESS OF MARRIAGE

All societies solemnize a marriage through some form of public ritual, which serves to highlight its importance.

DEVELO

RITE OF PASSAGE

The wedding ceremony serves as a *rite of passage*, a societal mechanism to indicate a change in social status. In this case the rite marks the change from being single to being married.

AFFIRMS SOCIETY'S PRINCIPLE OF LEGITIMACY

Through the requirement of a wedding, society asserts its right to control marriage and to legitimize any offspring.

SYMBOLIZES SOCIETAL AND FAMILY SUPPORT

The ceremonial nature of the event makes it clear that the marriage has the support both of society and of the families involved. This is an important initial factor in cementing the marital relationship.

STRENGTHENS KINSHIP TIES

The wedding ceremony usually brings together the relatives of both partners. This strengthens both the kinship relationships on each side and the in-law relationships.

MATERIAL HELP TO THE NEW COUPLE

Gifts of some sort are a part of all wedding ceremonies. Whether these take the form of money, cattle, clothes or help in building a home, they serve to provide the new couple with material help in beginning their marriage.

Rituals and Customs

The wedding ceremony of contemporary Americans is no less rich in rituals and customs than the ceremonies of the tribal societies that anthropologists have described. Several of these rituals are highlighted by Chesser (1980).

BRIDAL VEIL

The veil has long been used to symbolically protect the bride from evil spirits. It also serves to symbolize the bride's purity; also she is not subject to the stares of those at the ceremony. The lifting of the veil at the end of the ceremony marks her change in status to wife.

WHITE WEDDING GOWN

Marriages unite families as well as individuals. In the discussion of bride service (chapter 2), the importance of families guarding the virginity of their daughters was pointed out. White is meant to symbolize virginal purity.

WEDDING RING

From the earliest recorded history wedding rings have represented trust and commitment between partners. The placing of the ring on the third finger of the left hand dates back to ancient Egypt, where it was believed that a vein in that finger led directly to the heart, the seat of emotion.

WEDDING KISS

Traditionally, the wedding kiss was used to close the ceremony and to serve as a way of affirming the wedding vows. In earlier times the kiss was passed from priest to groom to bride, and from the priest's assistants to the wedding guests.

FERTILITY SYMBOLS

The cutting of the wedding cake and the presence of children in the wedding party were meant to encourage fertility.

Wedding Costs

Weddings are big business in American society (see Table 8.1).

Cost of All Weddings and New Marriages in the United States	
Engagement and wedding rings	$ 1.1 billion
Wedding ceremonies and receptions	$ 7.1 billion
Honeymoons	$ 2.7 billion
Furnishings for new homes	$12.1 billion
Total	$23.0 billion
Average Cost of a Wedding in the United States	
Reception	$2,300
Rings	808
Photography	470
Bridal attendants' apparel	446
Music	369
Bride's dress	100
Flowers	324
Rehearsal dinner	293
Men's rented formal wear	282
Invitations	200
Attendants' gifts	149
Bride's mother's dress	116
Headpiece	100
Clergy	83
Limousine	58
Total	$6,098

Table 8.1 Costs of Weddings in the United States: 1985. Source: Reed, 1986

In 1985 about $23 billion was spent on weddings and their associated activities; of this amount, $1.1 billion was spent for engagement and wedding rings, $7.1 billion for wedding ceremonies and receptions, $2.7 billion for honeymoons, and $12.1 billion for furnishing new homes (Reed, 1986). The cost of the average wedding was $6,098 (see Table 8.1), though there is considerable variation depending on geographical location and affluence of the families. The single most expensive item in the wedding ceremony is the reception, accounting for about one-third of the total amount; clothing for the bride, groom, and wedding party is the next largest item, about 20 percent of the wedding costs.

Legal Aspects of Marriage

Marriage is a legal as well as a social relationship. The state licenses people to marry and they must sign a marriage contract.

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

Each state issues a marriage license that authorizes a couple to enter into marriage. The requirements for obtaining a marriage license vary by state. All but eight states require a blood examination to test for syphilis (and some recently for AIDS); some require a waiting period between the issuance of the license and the actual marriage. However, there are some common elements that are required for a valid marriage to take place.

Age. The age at which marriage is permitted differs somewhat from state to state, but each state has a minimum age for those wishing to marry with parental consent, ranging from twelve for girls in Kansas to eighteen for both men and women in several states. The age of permission without parental consent is higher—eighteen, except for Mississippi, which requires men and women to be twenty-one; and Louisiana, which allows women to marry at sixteen.

Sex Difference. The partners must be different sexes for a legally contracted marriage. While a number of jurisdictions are beginning to recognize relationships between same-sex partners through the use of "domestic partnership agreements," a valid marriage exists only for heterosexual couples.

Kinship. Incest taboos prohibit marriage between close relatives (parents, children, siblings, aunts/uncles, nephews/nieces, first cousins, and, in some states, second cousins). Individuals involved in other more complex kinship relationships are also forbidden to marry in some states.

Marital Status. Only those not presently married can contract a valid marriage. To marry while already married is called *bigamy* and is a crime.

Free, Legally Competent, Nonfraudulent Choice. A forced or coerced marriage is not recognized as legal; nor is one obtained through fraud or trickery. Legal competence refers to having at least the minimal levels of intellectual ability and emotional stability required to make a competent choice to marry; the use of drugs or hypnosis to persuade a person to marry will result in the invalidity of the marriage.

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT

Marriage is a legal contract binding two parties to the relationship. In contrast to other legal contracts, the marriage contract cannot be altered simply by agreement between the two parties; the state is a silent but powerful party to the contract. Weitzman (1981) points out other differences between marriage and other contracts (e.g., in business). In marriage contracts, the provisions are general and unspecific, the penalties for violating provisions are not detailed, as they are in a business contract, and the terms of the contract (specifically what is required of each partner by the other) are often unknown to the two parties in advance of their marriage.

Weitzman points out another important issue. The law regarding marriage is based on four *unwritten* assumptions of the marriage contract that are grounded in a traditional view of gender roles.

The *husband was considered the head of the house* and hence was assumed to have the right to make all key decisions in the family.

The *husband was responsible for the economic support of the family* and thus held accountable for doing so.

The *wife was responsible for domestic service and child care* in the family. If the husband wished to help, that was acceptable, but it was the wife's responsibility.

The *wife would take the husband's name* as her own, as would their children.

Over the past two decades considerable changes have taken place that make marriage *legally* a more equal relationship. The gender-linked assumptions Weitzman highlighted are less accepted in the courts today. Increasingly, the relevant laws have become *gender neutral*, not linked to gender and decided on a case-by-case basis. The burden has been placed on each couple to decide how to structure their relationship. This change is especially evident in the number of women who do not take their husbands' names after marriage, or who link them with their own names in hyphenated form.

PRENUPTIAL CONTRACTS

Recently there has been an increase in the number of *prenuptial contracts*, those that couples write themselves before entering marriage. Initially used more for marriages in which one or both of the parties had considerable prior assets, such contracts are becoming more popular with people from other social strata. Most prenuptial agreements today specify the general distribution of assets if the marriage ends in divorce. Increasingly, more detail the marital and parental obligations of the two partners.

There are considerable differences in the perceived desirability of prenuptial contracts.

Positive Aspects. They force the partners to *clarify their expectations and aspirations* for the marriage and for one another. They also deal with important issues such as how property, income, and even child custody will be handled at *a time of less stress and conflict.* A prenuptial contract constitutes a *rational approach* to marriage as a contractual relationship by spelling out what is required. Finally, it is deemed *especially important for second (or subsequent) marriages* in which there is greater likelihood of substantial economic resources and children being involved.

Negative Aspects. The documents' *legal validity* varies by jurisdiction; in some states they are legally valid, in others they are not. Also, since people and situations change, such contracts may be *too inflexible* to accommodate these changes. Finally, the major argument critics have is that prenuptial contracts *imply a pessimistic outlook for the marriage*; they look forward to and assume its end. Such contracts are seen as unromantic by viewing marriage as a business relationship.

There is increasing legal support for prenuptial contracts. However, it is not clear whether young people entering marriage for the first time see them as a useful protection against failure or as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

THE HONEYMOON

The term "honeymoon" was first used in the sixteenth century. Honey has had a long history of symbolizing sweetness, fertility, health, and life. In addition, affection was thought to be affected by the lunar cycle. Put together then, honeymoon referred to the *special* sweetness that exists in the first month after the wedding. That usage still exists today. Newly elected presidents are said to have a honeymoon with the Congress in the early part of their term. The concept of honeymoon is also used to denote a period of heightened feeling and affection between marital partners at the beginning of marriage. For most people, however, honeymoon refers to the trip a married couple takes immediately after the wedding to recuperate from the hectic prewedding days and to prepare for the routines to come.

The Honeymoon as a "Trip"

Most American couples take a honeymoon trip just after the wedding. This is less likely for those who have had a sexual relationship before marriage, especially if they have been cohabiting.

FUNCTIONS OF THE HONEYMOON

Most young couples find the honeymoon trip useful. It gives them a measure of privacy, a temporary removal from the need to interact with family and friends. They are free from other roles and responsibilities. The honeymoon allows them to concentrate on one another and on the relationship, usually in a comfortable setting. The experience facilitates the development or practice of interpersonal skills that are useful in marriage. And the honeymoon often provides a legacy of exceedingly pleasant experiences and memories that can be drawn upon during times of marital difficulty.

TYPES OF HONEYMOON

Remarkably, there has been very little research done on the nature of the honeymoon trip. The most useful examination of this social activity was carried out by Rapoport and Rapoport (1964). They point to three different types of honeymoon styles.

Lovers' Nest. This is a form of honeymoon in which the two newlyweds are completely wrapped up in each other. Love and sex are at the forefront of this type of honeymoon; the physical surroundings and other activities are almost irrelevant.

Perpetuum Mobile. This type of honeymoon is best described in terms of the title of a motion picture of several years ago—*If This Is Tuesday, It Must Be Belgium.* This is a hectic, fast-paced trip on which the couple sees and does many and varied things.

Vacation. This is basically a period of time to recover from the frantic and anxiety-provoking time leading up to and including the wedding. It gives the couple a chance to rest before they return to their normal routines of work and/or school. It is more relaxed than "perpetuum mobile" and less erotically centered than "lovers' nest."

Honeymoon as the Initial Period of Marriage

For most people the beginning period of marriage is critical to its later success. Despite earlier preparation and anticipatory socialization, marriage is never completely what had been expected. Every new role requires some degree of "on-the-job training" to learn the subtleties and nuances that are not usually available to "outsiders." The honeymoon period is an important time for just such knowledge to be gained. This learning takes place through a series of stages in which some important functions of the honeymoon are carried out.

THE STAGES OF THE HONEYMOON PERIOD

The analysis of the honeymoon by Rapoport and Rapoport (1964) suggests that the new marital relationship goes through a series of stages.

Happy Honeymoon. This takes place as the two people continue to discover similarities between themselves and pile up joy upon joy. This is the period of unusually good rapport that the term honeymoon usually implies. Everything seems to go well, and the relationship seems to bring nothing but happiness.

Disillusionment and Regret. Gradually, unhappiness creeps in as the two people begin to discover and come to grips with differences between them. No two people are alike nor do they remain static or necessarily change in the same way. Hence, at some point these existing or newly occurring differences begin to intrude into the happy honeymoon. For many, the disillusionment seems even greater because of its contrast with the period of unusually good rapport that preceded it. Consequently, many couples begin to have feelings of regret for having married.

Accommodation. In relatively solid marriages, the two people learn to adjust to the realities of one another and those of the relationship. They learn that their partner has qualities they are not happy with; they learn either to adjust to these or to work out an appropriate way of changing them. In successful marriages this accommodation to reality takes place alongside a rekindling of the original spark that gave the relationship its value. The adjustment required at this stage, both accommodation and compromise, is affected by how the two dealt with the adjustment processes of courtship; it also sets the tone for how the couple will deal with problems that will arise later in the marriage.

FUNCTIONS OF THE HONEYMOON PERIOD

Duvall (1977) has analyzed the functions of the transition to marriage during its honeymoon stage. In doing so she uses the concept of *developmental tasks*, the necessary activities associated with changes in roles that make for successful or unsuccessful role performance (Havighurst, 1972). These changes do not take place at once but are part of the process of adjustment discussed above.

Realigning Loyalties to Put the Marital Partner First. This needs to be accomplished while each partner retains satisfying and functioning relations with parents, relatives, and friends. Most people have little difficulty in accomplishing this developmental task.

Establishing an Appropriate and Agreed-Upon Sharing of Marital and Domestic Responsibilities. Today, when a clear-cut and universal division of labor between men and women is not routinely accepted, each couple must establish a pattern that suits them. Who does the cooking, the shopping, and the staying at home when a child is ill is not *routinely* the responsibility of the woman as it was in the past. Whatever pattern is established must take account of the desires of both partners and needs to be negotiated between them.

Establishing Mutually Satisfying Emotional and Sexual Roles. Even those who have had a sexual relationship before marriage often find that having the same sexual partner requires a mutually acceptable pattern of expression. What may be satisfying occasionally with different partners may not be as satisfying on an ongoing basis with the same partner. Also, the emotional relationship required of those now sharing a life is different from the somewhat less frequent interactions of courtship. Again the key is the phrase "mutually satisfying."

Changing from a Premarital Identity as Single to an Identity as Married. This change does not happen overnight; yet this shift is essential to marital success. A marital identity requires automatic and routine consideration of the needs and desires of the partner, something that occurred only partially during courtship. For example, married people routinely check with their partner when they are invited to a party. As a single, one can make a decision to attend or not on the spot. After marriage, a person must check the partner's calendar and wishes. When this checking with the other becomes routine the transition to a couple identity has been accomplished.

To conclude, the honeymoon period of marriage is a time of adjustment. Adaptations in behavior are influenced by the processes of courtship and will have a decided effect on how subsequent adjustments occur later in the marriage. The unusually good rapport at this point in the marriage makes these changes less painful.

People choose to marry for many reasons. Some of them are more socially acceptable than others. Those marriages contracted for less socially acceptable reasons often result in divorce.

The engagement signals a public commitment to marry and a change in social status. It allows two people to recover from the uncertainties and anxieties of dating and courtship, and to test their compatibility through activities they anticipate will be involved in marriage. The engagement is useful in facilitating certain changes in both individual and couple identity, and encourages the partners to engage in anticipated marital roles as they learn the importance of accommodation, compromise, and empathy. The engagement also brings difficulties that may lead to elopement, breaking the engagement, working through the problems or entering an unsatisfying marriage.

Weddings are a universal if expensive experience, although their form varies. They emphasize the seriousness of marriage and serve as a rite of passage to a new social status. A number of wedding customs have evolved over the centuries to define the nature of the ceremony. Weddings also have a practical side.

Marriage is a legal relationship and certain legal requirements must be met to obtain a state license. The marriage contract is an ambiguous document whose previously unstated assumptions were based on traditional conceptions of gender roles. Prenuptial contracts were frequently used in upper-class marriages to protect resources brought to the marriage. Today, they are increasingly being used in middle-class marriages to specify appropriate marital and parental roles.

The honeymoon has been used to refer both to the trip that most people take immediately after the wedding and the initial period of unusually good rapport in marriage. Despite its costs, the honeymoon trip is often beneficial to marriage. Three different forms of the honeymoon trip demonstrate the wide range of practices involved. As a period of marriage, the honeymoon can be viewed in terms of stage of the relationship, and its specific developmental tasks. Accomplishing these developmental tasks improves the chances for a successful marriage.

9

Alternative Lifestyles

Marriage is not the only adult lifestyle. Today there are a variety of ways in which adults make their way through life. This chapter discusses two specific alternative lifestyles. Issues involving singlehood as a contemporary lifestyle are explored. So, too, are historical and relatively recent forms of communal living.

SINGLEHOOD

Most people enter adult life as single person. While most marry, many do not. Of those who marry, some will divorce or be widowed and will return, at least temporarily, to singlehood. Thus singlehood is a common human condition. What leads it to be seen as an alternative lifestyle is the generally negative view society holds of it. In colonial times single persons either lived with their own families or with other families for whom they worked or to whom they were apprenticed. Thus singles were tied to families and were exposed to the societal mechanisms of social control. What is the situation today?

Prevalence of Singlehood

The number of singles is increasing rapidly in the United States. In 1970 there were approximately 21 million singles over the age of eighteen, or 16 percent of the population; today, there are about 39 million, or 22 percent of the population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989: Table 50). This increase is due in large part to the influx of "late baby boomers" reaching marriageable age without marrying. In fact, the sharpest rate of increase in singles is among young adults in their twenties and thirties. In contrast to the colonial period, a substantial proportion of these young singles live in separate households. This number has increased over just one generation; single-person households constitute approximately 25 percent of all households, up from 10 percent in the late 1950s (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988).

Singles include diverse kinds of people—those never married, the divorced, and the widowed. Of these, the recent increase is largely due to those who never married. The percent of those in their twenties who have never married approximately doubled in the past twenty years (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988: 6). Many of these are undoubtedly postponing marriage rather than deciding not to do it at all. Supporting this interpretation is the fact that the increase parallels the increase in the number of women attending institutions of higher education (U.S. Department of Education, 1988). These women tend to marry at a later age than do those who do not attend college; they often postpone marriage even further after they complete their education, in order to get established in a career (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988).

The increase in the rates of divorce over the previous decade and a half has also contributed to the numbers of singles. While many of the divorced remarry they remain single for some period of time; some do not remarry at all. In the only variation from this pattern of increase, the number of those widowed has decreased slightly over the past two decades.

Myths About Being Single

Historically, Americans have viewed singles through the lens of culturally derived myths. Singles are often viewed as being different; they are either losers, those who could not get a spouse, or sexually fast and loose. Cargan and Melko (1982) analyzed both the myths and realities surrounding singles.

SINGLES ARE TIED TO THEIR MOTHERS' APRON STRINGS

Many people believe that singles are excessively tied to their parents and families. This bond prevents them from forming a strong attachment to a peer that will lead to marriage. Cargan and Melko find, however, that marrieds and singles differ very little in their perceptions about parents and other relatives.

SINGLES ARE SELFISH

Singles are perceived as more self-centered than marrieds, pursuing their own interests rather than evidencing concern for family, friends, or community. It is true that singles are more likely than married people to vacation instead of visiting family. However, singles place greater value on maintaining friendships and are greater contributors to their communities than are those who are married, probably because they have more time and fewer family obligations.

SINGLES ARE RICH

With no family to support, singles, it is believed, are richer than those who are married. The facts are that most singles are young and relatively low on the economic ladder. The married people in the Cargan and Melko study were economically better off than the singles.

SINGLES ARE HAPPIER

Freed from the burden of family and having sufficient income, singles are presumed to enjoy life more than marrieds. Again, this stereotype turns out to be false. Reality is more complicated. Single men are somewhat less happy than married men and more likely to feel depressed, anxious, and lonely; married women are the least happy.

PERMANENT SINGLEHOOD IS DESIRED BY SINGLES

Given their happy, more independent lifestyle, singles are believed to view their situation as a desirable way to spend their life. In contrast, however, most singles do not agree with this view; they wish and expect to be married within the next several years.

THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH ADULTS WHO ARE SINGLE

This myth is in sharp contrast to other myths that portray singles as happy, rich, and unencumbered. Actually, some have singlehood thrust upon them and others choose it, either permanently or temporarily. Any attempt to characterize *all* singles as having something wrong with them is as accurate as believing that there is something right about *all* married people. Obviously there are different kinds of people within each category.

Realities About Being Single

In their research Cargan and Melko (1982) also point out some views about singlehood that are better grounded in reality.

SINGLES DO NOT FIT EASILY IN MARRIED SOCIETY

Singles do make married people a bit uncomfortable. The United States is basically a "coupled" society; people socialize in pairs. Dinner parties often have an even rather than odd number of guests; restaurants find it easier to provide a table for two rather than three, or for four rather than five. Consequently, married people often feel that they have to provide a partner for their single friends to round out a social situation. Singles also are seen by some married couples as a potential threat to their relationship.

SINGLES HAVE MORE TIME

Freed of the responsibilities of a nuclear family of orientation, singles generally have more time for visiting friends and for leisure-time pursuits.

SINGLES HAVE MORE FUN

The greater time that singles have for hobbies, social activities, and other leisure-time activities does often result in their having more fun than married people.

SINGLES ARE SEXUAL SWINGERS

The research by Simenauer and Carroll (1982) suggest that singles have an active sexual life to complement their active social life. They seem able to separate love and a good sexual experience, though most do not like casual sexual encounters; they prefer some reasonable relationship with a sexual partner.

SINGLES ARE LONELY

Despite their active social and sexual life, singles characterize themselves as lonely. They feel that they do not have someone with whom they can share or discuss feelings and ideas on a regular basis. Feelings of loneliness are stronger for divorced singles than for those who were never married; presumably, the former know what they now lack.

LIFE FOR SINGLES IS GETTING BETTER

There is greater tolerance of different lifestyles today. Marriage is less likely to be seen as the only acceptable choice for adults. Employment and housing opportunities for singles have improved over the past decade or two, making it easier to sustain a single life. Many businesses cater specifically to this group and thus provide singles with a increased variety of legitimate activities tailored for their enjoyment.

Types of Singles

Singles vary not only in their social characteristics and personal traits, but also in terms of the lifestyle choices they have made. Stein (1981: 10–12)) has developed a useful *typology*, a systematic classification of types of singles based on whether they have chosen a specific style and whether they expect it to be temporary or not.

VOLUNTARY TEMPORARY SINGLES

These individuals expect to be married at some point. Some are young people who have never been married and are actively seeking a partner. Others are never married who are postponing marriage for a number of reasons, and some are the divorced who do not wish to remarry for some identifiable period of time. Others are cohabiting as a way of testing a possible marriage relationship. Though they choose singlehood as a temporary measure, some of these individuals will remain single and never marry.

VOLUNTARY STABLE SINGLES

Some people choose singlehood as a permanent lifestyle. These include people who have never married and do not wish to do so, as well as the formerly married who choose not to remarry. Cohabiting couples who do not intend to marry, single parents either formerly married or not who are not seeking a marital partner, and those whose lifestyles rule out marriage (e.g. Roman Catholic priests and nuns) are also included by Stein in this category.

INVOLUNTARY TEMPORARY SINGLES

These individuals are actively seeking a marital partner. However, at the present time they do not have a partner. Both younger never marrieds and older divorced and widowed individuals who wish to find a mate are included in this category. These people are not currently single by choice.

INVOLUNTARY STABLE SINGLES

These are the people—primarily older who have either never married, or are divorced or widowed—who wish to (re)marry but have come to the realization that they are unlikely to do so. They may have some physical, psychological, or social problems that make (re)marriage only a marginal possibility; at some ages, there simply aren't enough available men.

This typology has been useful in understanding the variety of lifestyles among singles. Furthermore, it is clear that individuals can move from one of these categories to another depending on their particular circumstance at the time. Stein (1981: 11–12) recognizes the fluidity of these categories.

The Choice of Singlehood

The decision to marry or to remain single involves a complex set of factors, as does the decision to cohabit or to end an intimate relationship. The influences on these decisions can be seen as *pushes* (negative features of the present circumstance) or *pulls* (attractive features of the alternative situation). Stein (1981:18) has detailed both the pushes and pulls of marriage and singlehood (see Table 9.1).

The table shows the variety of elements that go into the decision to marry or to remain single. It makes clear how complex these choices are. In contrast to the generally accepted stereotype, the decision to remain single, either temporarily or as a lifestyle, involves both the perceived negative features of marriage and the anticipated positive experiences of singlehood. In short, Stein argues, it is not a decision generally made because there are no alternatives. Some singles eagerly choose this lifestyle and demonstrate their flexibility and adaptation to a way of living that has generally not been encouraged or supported by society. Despite this, and without the security and support of a consistent partner, most singles move into what Stein (1981: 18) calls "uncharted territory"; he considers them "pioneers of an emergent cultural lifestyle."

Marriage	
Pushes (negatives in present situations)	**Pulls (attractions in potential situations)**
Pressure from parents	Approval of parents
Desire to leave home	Desire for children and own family
Fear of independence	Example of peers
Loneliness and isolation	Romanticization of marriage
No knowledge or perception of alternatives	Physical attraction
Cultural and social discrimination against singles	Love, emotional attachment
	Security, social status, social prestige
	Socialization
	Job availability, wage structure, and promotions
	Social policies favoring the married and the responses of social institutions
Singlehood	
Pushes (to leave permanent relationships)	**Pulls (to remain single or return to singlehood)**
Lack of friends, isolation, loneliness	Career opportunities and development
Restricted availability of new experiences	Availability of sexual experiences
Suffocating one-to-one relationship, feeling trapped	Exciting lifestyle, variety of experiences, freedom to change
Obstacles to self-development	Psychological and social autonomy, self-sufficiency
Boredom, unhappiness, and anger	Support structures: sustaining friendships, women's and men's groups, political groups, therapeutic groups, collegiate groups
Poor communication with mate	
Sexual frustration	

Table 9.1 Pushes and Pulls Toward Marriage and Singlehood. Source: Stein (1981). Reprinted by permission of Peter S. Stein.

Problems of Singlehood

Despite Stein's upbeat assessment of singlehood, many singles face serious problems as a consequence of their lifestyle. Foremost among these is loneliness.

LONELINESS

A substantial number of both single men and women, about 25 percent, indicate that loneliness is one of the major problems they face; this is true of young singles and older widows. In fact, Burns (1986) highlights the loneliness of older teenagers who do not develop adequate interpersonal skills and who do not date frequently.

Loneliness is especially acute among singles who have recently ended an intimate relationship. The contrast with their former situation heightens their pain. As a consequence, singles who have been married experience greater levels of depression than singles who have never been married. There is also a relationship between levels of depression and number of children; for single parents, the more children the greater the likelihood of depression, while just the reverse relationship is found for married parents.

STEREOTYPES OF SINGLES

The general view of singles is that either they are social losers or social swingers. Those who consider singles losers are likely to shun them. They are seen as being single because they lack the skills and attractiveness to have a partner; thus, they are not likely to be good associates. On the other hand, some see singles as swingers and this leads to other problems. For those who are married, the swinging life of singles is a potential threat. The single might intrude into the marriage and provide an alternative to one of the partners. Or the contrast between the presumed active and exciting life of singles with the more mundane and routine life of married couples might heighten the partner's sense that the marriage is dull.

LIVING WITH PARENTS

While the number of young singles living alone has increased substantially over the past several decades, many of them still live at home with their parents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988: Table A-6). With the recent economic downturn more young people who were originally out on their own have found it economically necessary to return to the parental home. In 1988 almost half of all young women ages eighteen to twenty-four were living with their parents, up from 35 percent in 1960; and 61 percent of young men of the same age similarly resided with their parents, up from 52 percent in 1960 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988: Table A-6).

When young adults live at home they tend to be viewed ambivalently by their parents. Most parents recognize them as adults and wish to treat them as such. On the other hand, they are still *children* living in their parents' home, and it is not surprising to see earlier patterns of parent-child relations emerge. While sensitive parents and young adults can work out a set of appropriate ground rules for this situation, not all can; and for many, living at home constitutes a mild to severe problem.

COMMUNAL LIVING

A stark contrast to singlehood is communal living. While the single life involves separation from others, communal arrangements are built around the presence of and connection with other people.

What Is a Commune?

While there are many types of communes, there are some common elements in all. In essence, a *commune* is a self-supporting community of individuals living together who share a common purpose. In many respects communes approximate one or more of the family forms (nuclear, extended, polygamous) discussed in chapter 2. They often arise out of a search for a new way to find meaning in life.

Communes have existed throughout the world and at various points in history. Some have consisted of a handful of individuals, others have contained hundreds of members. Communes have never been a dominant social form in society, nor do they usually survive for very long. Communes returned to prominence in the United States during the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. Then, as before, they differed widely.

The Variety of Communal Arrangements

There are several ways to categorize the diversity of communes. One useful system was proposed by Fairfield (1971). While based on the experiences of the 1960s in the United States, the typology seems to be more widely appropriate.

RELIGIOUS COMMUNES

These communes are based on religious principles of family. In Christian religious communes, the attempt to find meaning centers around a commitment to the life and principles of Jesus Christ. Some religious communes are structured around eastern religious beliefs and practices. Whatever the religion, these communes often allow for a separate nuclear family arrangement as well as a larger group relationship. The two are often seen as separate spheres permitting the privacy of the family and connection to the larger group. But commitment to the commune takes on substantial importance.

IDEOLOGICAL COMMUNES

These communes are organized around a set of nonreligious ideological principles. During the 1960s the two most common ideological frameworks around which communes developed were socialism and behavioral psychology; in particular, the ideas of Skinner (1948) dominated this latter type.

GROUP MARRIAGE COMMUNES

Communes of this type deliberately set out to create new styles of family living in contrast to the traditional nuclear family. They permit and even encourage a wide variety of temporary or more stable intimate relationships; the obligations of members to each other are to be negotiated rather than dictated in advance by the culture.

SERVICE COMMUNES

These communes are created to establish a total environment encompassing family, work, and recreation within the group. They often are created or used by people who have been previously disadvantaged, to serve as an important system of social support. One of the more famous communes of this type was Synanon. Subsequently, Synanon was judged to be a *cult-like* organization, a self-contained group that often has an antagonistic relationship to society. Synanon inflicted considerable pain on some of its members before it dissolved (Mitchell, Mitchell and Ofshe, 1980).

HIPPIE COMMUNES

In the 1960s a number of communes were centered around the prevalent drug culture of the day. They attracted drug users who were antagonistic to mainstream society. These communes cultivated a mystical quality about their activities.

YOUTH COMMUNES

While many if not most of the communes were populated by the young, this form was often explicitly composed of young college graduates or dropouts. They formed communes to share the advantages of group living.

In addition to these diverse types of communes, Eiduson and Zimmerman's (1985) typology of communes included three additional forms.

LEADER-DIRECTED COMMUNAL FAMILIES

These communes are organized explicitly around a *charismatic* leader, a person with extraordinary personal characteristics and appeal who commands respect and obedience. Rev. Jim Jones created such a communal family, which was eventually destroyed through a mass suicide; similarly, the Charles Manson "family" was a group organized around a psychotic but fascinating murderer who is now currently in prison. The "New Harmony" communities were founded in the nineteenth century because of the dynamic personal characteristics of "Father" George Rapp.

RURAL DOMESTIC COMMUNES

Some people band together in communes organized around a desire to return to the simple existence of traditional rural life. These communes are a reaction to the hectic and difficult nature of urban life. The separate existence of nuclear families within the commune is generally respected and these smaller groups join with each other to meet the larger communal needs.

URBAN DOMESTIC COMMUNES

Members of these communes try to capture some aspects of extended families by uniting both individuals and nuclear families. They attempt to create a small, tight-knit community within the large, diverse, and hectic urban environment. The key to this commune is the mutual assistance members offer each other in meeting many of the routine aspects of daily urban life.

Some Nineteenth-Century Communes

THE ONEIDA COMMUNITY

The Oneida community was founded in upstate New York in 1848 by John Humphrey Noyes, a lawyer–turned–minister. Noyes emphasized the importance of the spiritual equality of all people. He insisted that people should not be limited in their intimate relationships. The group, not the individual, was important. He argued that monogamy was an example of possessiveness and selfishness. Members of the Oneida community practiced a form of group marriage called *complex marriage*; since romantic love weakened spiritual love, sexual activity should be divorced from it. With some minor restrictions, members were free to engage in sexual relationships with any other member of the community. Conflict within the group was handled through a daily ritual of public criticism.

When Noyes left in 1879 the practice of complex marriages ended. However, the commercial ventures of the community became quite successful. Eventually the community spread to other locations and began manufacturing and marketing cookware, silverware, jewelry, gifts, and other items; they incorporated in 1880 and are currently listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

THE NEW HARMONY COMMUNITIES

In 1814 the followers of "Father" George Rapp left Pennsylvania and created a community in Harmonie, on the Wabash River in Indiana. Though their ideology included *celibacy*, refraining from sexual intercourse, their continued growth suggested it was not really practiced. The community developed several successful commercial enterprises. Internal conflict and disagreements with the surrounding communities over the next ten years led the group to abandon the site and return to Pennsylvania in 1824.

The Harmonie community was purchased by Robert Owen, an eccentric English Utopian who renamed the place New Harmony. He invited people to come and develop the community at his expense. New Harmony failed in 1828, though some of its buildings remain as a national historical landmark to the present day.

THE AMANA COMMUNITY

In 1853 a group of German immigrants founded the "Community of True Inspiration" in Iowa. It was originally intended as a religious commune to provide a supportive environment to newcomers to America. As with the other communes, it developed as a commercial enterprise, one that became quite successful. The religiously organized commune died out during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Today, however, Amana is associated not only with refrigerators but with electric appliances and grandfather clocks.

Some Twentieth-Century Communes

TWIN OAKS

A contemporary commune based on the principles of behavioral psychology was established in Virginia in 1967. Taking its organizing principles from B.F. Skinner's (1948) famous book *Walden Two* (1948), the Twin Oaks community was seen by one of its founders, Kinkade (1974), as an experiment to demonstrate the possibility of an egalitarian society.

Initially chaotic and unorganized, Twin Oaks evolved into a highly efficient and democratic community. Titles were eliminated, and nobody could own private property. Clothes were available from a central facility. Drugs were forbidden and the use of alcohol, tobacco, and television discouraged. Work was allocated in ways that shared the burden among all members. Childrearing practices followed Skinner's principles of behaviorism.

Twin Oaks experienced financial problems that reduced its self-sufficiency, forcing some members to work at outside jobs. There was also a high rate of turnover. These problems made it difficult to sustain the original ideas that led to the community's establishment.

PEOPLE'S COMMUNES IN CHINA

After the People's Republic of China was formed in 1949, the attempt to establish what is perhaps the largest communal arrangement in history began. These communes were created under the guiding ideology of communism, with its economic and philosophical bases. The communes were to be both agricultural and educational. They would provide the necessary agricultural products for a poor but developing society. At the same time, they would undertake the responsibility for educating the kind of person needed to develop the new socialist state.

These communes built on the importance of the extended family in Chinese culture. They became large extended families. The communes were organized along the lines of respect for authority, only in this case authority was transferred from the *patriarch* (the eldest man in the family) to the state. But the habits and traditions traditionally associated with family respect and cooperative activity were useful in the establishment of communes.

THE ISRAELI KIBBUTZ

This communal form is probably one of the most successful in history. A *kibbutz* is a collective settlement in which the members are all equal and share both in the responsibilities and benefits of the cooperative venture. The early kibbutzim were based on the principles of democratic socialism. Parental and patriarchal authority were abolished; equality was the rule. Everything was owned in common. The kibbutz owned the residences, the tools, the food, the clothes, everything. Residences were assigned and clothes were distributed by the kibbutz. Meals were taken together in a common dining hall. Children lived not with their parents but with age mates and were communally educated in the principles of democracy.

The early kibbutzim were geared to agriculture. The various jobs were rotated so that everybody shared both the pleasant and unpleasant tasks and no special expertise could be developed to claim special privilege. More recently, however, kibbutzim jobs have become specialized; furthermore, women are found increasingly in "women's jobs." Despite these departures from its original ideals, the Israeli kibbutz stands as a substantially successful form of contemporary commune.

Sociological Considerations

Communes exist in a variety of forms. However, they have many characteristics in common. In a detailed analysis of communes, Kanter (1973) has pointed to four main attributes that communes all share to varying degrees:

> There is less of a difference between the nuclear family and the rest of the communal members than is generally the case in society.
>
> Many of the functions traditionally provided by the family are carried out by the entire commune.
>
> There is a minimal distinction between domestic and economic life in the commune.
>
> There is a much more flexible division of labor among the commune members.

In short, differences among commune members are minimized. Consequently, their responsibilities are more likely to be shared widely and equally. Communes tend to weaken the bonds of the nuclear family, which could conceivably threaten the loyalty of members to the entire group.

Most communes do not last long. Those that survive for some time do so largely because of a strong set of central beliefs, and often a strong charismatic leader. Since most communes are minority arrangements within their society, their presence is often tolerated only as long as they do not seriously threaten the society.

OTHER FORMS OF ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES

Two other nontraditional lifestyles are cohabitation and homosexual relationships. Cohabitation was discussed in chapter 6, and homosexuality in chapter 5; thus, they are not further elaborated upon here.

Not all people adopt the traditional marriage lifestyle. Increasingly, more people have remained single, particularly since the increase in the divorce rate during the 1970s and early 1980s.

There are many myths about single people. Though these perceptions are generally inaccurate, there are some realities about singles that set them apart from their married peers. They do not fit easily into America's "coupled" society, and they enjoy a wider variety of social and sexual experiences. Despite this, singles are more likely to be lonely, especially those who have been married previously.

Singles vary both in whether they choose to remain unattached and for how long. Like those who marry, singles are subject to pushes and pulls that lead them to their particular lifestyle. Singles face problems of loneliness and the consequences of the stereotypes that others have of them. Many singles, especially the young, live at home with parents; this environment occasionally serves to put them back in the child's role, which few find satisfying.

Another type of alternative lifestyle involves communal living. Communes are self-supporting communities that exist throughout the world and throughout history. Despite their diverse forms, however, most communes have certain characteristics in common. They reduce the boundaries between the nuclear family and the rest of the group, and they take more responsibility for functions originally carried out by the family. Further, there is less of a distinction between domestic and economic activities, and a more flexible division of labor among group members. Finally, communes *rarely last long; those that do often have either a strong leader or a clear central set of ideological beliefs. Some of the earlier communes established in the United States are long gone, but a number of commercial enterprises started by these communes continue successfully today.*

10

Marital Roles and Scripts

Marriage is a complex intimate and social relationship. Both the couple and society have expectations about the nature of marital life. These conceptions are, on one hand, contractual and restricting; on the other, they are fluid enough to require negotiation between the partners. Socially defined marital roles have recently given way to more flexible scripts.

There are two general types of marriage and five different forms evident in marital relationships. In addition, the experience of married life differs over the family life cycle. This chapter examines all of these issues.

EXPECTATIONS FOR MARRIAGE

People enter marriage with a set of expectations about the nature of this important intimate relationship. While each person's views of what marriage will entail are based upon unique personal experience, there are some common expectations.

Permanence

Most people entering marriage expect it to be a permanent, lifelong relationship. This view is supported by most religions. In addition, the state requires its permission to end this relationship, implying that it does not expect marriage to be taken and/or ended lightly. Historically, the family was created through marriage to meet the essential needs of the individual and society, especially those for economic security and the procreation and rearing of children. This led to the expectation of permanence. Interestingly, this view developed during a period when the human life span was relatively short. Permanence in marriage, then, might mean ten to twenty years; today, it could mean half a century! Despite this change, however, society generally supports a view of marriage as permanent.

Though the relatively high divorce rate has made it quite clear that marriage does not signify or require permanency, most people expect their marriage will last. Few people marry with the view that it will be a short-term relationship. Most believe that their marriage will not end in divorce.

Primary Relationship

Marriage is the central relationship for most people. Most people recognize the primary nature of the marital tie, which serves to strengthen it further. Marital partners expect that their marriage will dominate all other relationships. It is not that other commitments are unimportant; obligations to work, friends, and the nuclear family of orientation are not trivial. However, these other relationships are generally recognized as secondary to a person's commitments to spouse and children.

Sexual Exclusivity

It is believed that sexual exclusivity initially developed in marriage as a way of maintaining clarity in patrilineal descent. Sexual fidelity was more important in the woman since it guaranteed that her children were also her husband's children, through whom inheritance passed. Later, Judeo-Christian conceptions of marriage extended the importance of marital fidelity for both partners.

The frequency of *extramarital sex* is relatively high. Despite this, most Americans believe that sex outside of marriage is wrong; they still hold to the ideal of marital sexual exclusiveness.

Personal Happiness

In all societies marriage has both a social and a personal component, though the balance between the two may differ with different cultures. Where marriages are arranged, social needs are more prominent. Where marriage partners are freely chosen, the personal aspects of marriage are more important. Because of our system of conjugal courtship, Americans view marriage as a means of achieving personal happiness and fulfillment. Social influences are not unimportant; however, within these constraints people choose marriage with a partner whom they expect will bring them joy and satisfaction.

MARRIAGE AS A SOCIAL CONTRACT

Earlier it was pointed out that marriage involves a legal contract between two parties. But marriage is also a *social* contract in which the partners play a *social role*; that is, they are expected to act in a particular manner because of the *social status* or position they occupy. Traditional roles are increasingly giving way to more flexible arrangements.

Traditional Marital Roles

There are many different *marital roles*, or the set of attitudes and behaviors marital partners are expected to demonstrate in marriage. These roles are often defined in general terms by the culture of the particular society, with some specific details left to the arrangements between the partners. While there are many possible marital roles, Nye (1976) has identified eight of the most important roles in the American family (see Table 10.1).

Provider	Assumes responsibility for the financial support of the family. With this is usually the responsibility for providing safety and security.
Housekeeper	Involves obtaining, preparing, and cooking the food, maintaining a habitable house, caring for clothing and household furnishings.
Child Care	Provides basic physical and psychological conditions to assure the normal development of a healthy child.
Child Socialization	Includes the basic child-care role, but goes much further. Involves all integrated efforts to produce a socialized, competent individual. This role combines a mixture of intellectual, social, and emotional goals in child-rearing.
Sexual	Functions as a satisfying sexual partner, within the context of a mutually enjoyable, and usually exclusive, sexual relationship, includes initiating and responding to sexual advances.
Recreational	Is responsible for organizing and carrying out family recreational activities.
Therapeutic	Assists the spouse in coping with and resolving problems of a psychological nature, is supportive and emotionally facilitative.
Kinship	Assumes the obligation to maintain contact and good relationships with kin.

Table 10.1 Important Marital Roles. Adapted from Nye, 1976

In American society it has been quite common for wives to be assigned the child-care, housekeeper, kinship (handling family relationships), sexual, and therapeutic roles while the primary responsibility of husbands is to play the provider role; child socialization and recreational roles are often the province of both husband and wife. This division is based upon the traditional conception of appropriate gender roles. It suggests the "divided power" form of egalitarian family authority patterns, in which husbands and wives have separate spheres of influence and decision making in the family.

Changing Conceptions of Marital Roles

The traditional division of labor between husbands and wives in American families is in the process of breaking down. While this change is occurring more rapidly in the middle class than in the lower class, relatively rigid allocation of tasks by society to one or another family member is no longer the rule in many families. Instead, an increasing number of families seek an equal division of the responsibilities of family life. More men than previously, for example, are participating in family housework and child care, especially in dual-career families.

Many of these changes in the family have emerged from the more general revolution taking place in conceptions of gender roles. Couples are freer today than they have ever been to fashion their own marital roles. Many are taking advantage of this opportunity to define their roles in ways that will increase the benefits of marriage for both. Some are tearing down barriers between these roles, while others are reversing the traditional role assignments; still others are creating new ways to live as a family. In fact, the conception of marital roles with predetermined expectations is giving way to the idea of marital scripts. The former is more rigid and inflexible than the latter.

MARITAL SCRIPTS

The concept of *marital scripts*, individual beliefs and expectations about how marital couples should behave toward each other and treat their common responsibilities, contrasts with the idea of marital roles. The role conception stems from the structural-functional perspective, in which society is presumed to define how people are required to behave in the positions they occupy. Conceiving of marital behavior in terms of scripts is rooted within the symbolic interaction perspective that sees individuals having a much stronger part to play in fashioning their behavior. These two ways of looking at marriage are not incompatible.

Negotiating Scripts

In marriage, as elsewhere, society provides broad guidelines, or norms, for behavior. However, even within these normative constraints considerable variation in behavior is possible. For example, social norms define how school teachers should behave—they should be on time, know their subject matter, transmit an understanding of the necessary material to students, and treat students fairly and with respect. However, there are teachers who conform to these guidelines and yet are not good teachers. Other teachers go beyond what is minimally required of them. In short, guidelines outline the essential requirements while still allowing a great deal of individuality in determining behavior.

This flexibility is evident when the whole family is involved, and the participating individuals must negotiate their definitions of what behavior is appropriate and useful. This is clearly the case in marriage, where the actions of each family member have direct effects and implications for other family members. Marital behavior usually results from jointly negotiated scripts that take the ideas and needs of both partners into account, rather than from rigid and externally defined marital roles.

Flexibility in Scripts

Flexible scripts take into account the fact that people and situations change. Establishing an inflexible framework for marital behavior, even if done jointly by the partners, can become a straitjacket. What was useful at one point in a marriage may not be helpful at a later time.

Adhering strictly and inflexibly to a negotiated script may also cause difficulties. For example, in some families husbands and wives may have worked out an equal division of childcare responsibilities. But something may arise that requires a revision of the agreed-upon plan. If the script is inflexible it will become a source of conflict. If the script is taken to be flexible, some form of compromise can be negotiated.

Flexibility is necessary in marriages; otherwise, they become static and die. O'Neill and O'Neill (1972) highlight the importance of keeping marriages open—flexible, as they call it. Otherwise a marriage may continue in name but not in reality; the life and vitality, the sharing and enjoyment, will disappear.

TYPES OF MARRIAGES

Marriages can be categorized in a number of ways. One way looks at the benefits that result from the relationship. Thus marriages can be seen as either utilitarian or intrinsic. This distinction is useful in clarifying the differences in how people view their marriage.

Utilitarian Marriages

Utilitarian marriages are contracted for a variety of practical reasons. Some are based on sheer economic necessity, as when a single mother marries someone primarily to provide necessities for her children. Others are entered into for career advancement or to obtain some of the luxuries that money brings.

Economic advantage is not the only reason for a utilitarian marriage. Some utilitarian marriages provide a desired "good family image." Others allow for an ongoing and satisfying sexual relationship. Social standing in the community may be another reason for this form of marriage. The reasons vary, but they are all viewed as pragmatic and tangible.

Bernard (1964) indicated that utilitarian marriages more often involve *parallel relationships* among partners, in which their roles and interests are somewhat separate and discrete. In many cases this segregation follows traditional gender role lines. While more frequent in lower-class families, this kind of marriage occurs in all social classes.

Utilitarian marriages focus on the very practical benefits they bring to one or more of the family members. In general, Americans look down upon such a basis for marriage. However, basing a marriage on its practical benefits does not exclude the possibility of its becoming a loving, affectionate, and supportive relationship. While Americans expect love to lead to marriage, love may also follow marriage contracted on another basis.

Intrinsic Marriage

Marriages based upon love and emotional attachment are referred to as *intrinsic marriages*. The emotional rather than practical benefits of marriage are what draw people together. Strong affectional feelings and concern for the welfare of the partner are central to this type of marriage, and meeting the other's needs is also important.

In contrast to the parallel relationship of utilitarian marriages, intrinsic marriages exhibit an *interactional marriage pattern* in which the lives of the partners are much more intertwined, and in which companionship and joint activities are central. Spouses in intrinsic marriages see themselves as partners in a joint enterprise.

While not free of problems and conflict, intrinsic marriages come closer to the American ideal of marriage than do utilitarian relationships. However, they are more vulnerable to divorce because the emotional investment people make in them is sometimes too high and unrealistic. When they are found to be less emotionally satisfying than desired, these marriages are more likely to break up. Conversely, utilitarian marriages may hold together despite unhappiness because of the practical benefits they provide.

MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP PATTERNS

The relationships established between married couples vary considerably. One useful way of looking at them is in terms of the "different kinds of adjustment and conceptions of marriage" developed by Cuber and Harroff (1965) in the course of interviewing 211 couples who had been married for ten years. (These same patterns have also been noted in cohabiting couples; Clatworthy, 1975.) While a couple's relationship is capable of changing, Cuber and Harroff point out that it rarely does. The relationship patterns described below tend to be stable over the life of a marriage.

Conflict-Habituated Marriages

As the name implies, this type of marital relationship is filled with conflict. There is considerable tension and unresolved conflict between the partners. Quarreling and nagging are part of everyday life. Conflict is not necessarily generated by a specific issue, it is just part of the habitual behavior of the partners. Anxiety and tension are constantly present, but at a relatively low level and generally under control.

This kind of relationship does not necessarily lead to an unstable marriage and divorce. A low level of constant conflict serves the emotional needs of the partners for "safe" conflict, which, in fact, binds them to one another. In general, these couples are discreet about their differences and keep them hidden from most outsiders, though not their children.

Cuber and Harroff found this type of intrinsic marriage to be the most prevalent form of relationship among their respondents.

Devitalized Marriage

This form, also quite common in Cuber and Harroff's sample, is in sharp contrast to the conflict-habituated marriage; in fact there is little overt conflict. Couples in devitalized marriages report being deeply in love in the beginning of the relationship and sharing a strong emotional and sexual bond. However, the vitality and zest seems to have gone out of their marriage over time. They have drifted apart emotionally and rarely enjoy the sexual part of their marriage.

Devitalized couples generally spend little time with each other. They share fewer interests than was the case earlier in their marriage. However, they do spend "duty time" together, activities necessary to their relationship; for example, they may jointly plan and carry out social entertaining responsibilities and activities with their children. They also follow through jointly on any community obligations they have.

This form of marriage is quite stable. While emotionally empty, it meets many of the pragmatic needs of both partners. In fact, many report that this is what they believe most marriages become after several years. They view marriage as evolving from a deep, romantic relationship to one that is routine, useful, and relatively conflict free, but no longer based on an emotional high.

Passive-Congenial

In some ways similar to devitalized marriage, this utilitarian type of marital relationship also deemphasizes the emotional closeness of partners and the intensity of the affectional bond. However, couples in a passive-congenial marriage never expected and never had an emotionally intense intimate relationship. Their marriage was utilitarian from the outset. They enjoy the companionship of the partner and their joint activities. Middle-class couples stress the importance of their common civic and professional responsibilities along with their commitment to their children. Working-class passive-congenial families center their activities around economic needs and their plans for their children.

There is little conflict in this type of marriage. The couple's relationship is "comfortable." Much of their emotional energy is directed toward things other than the marital bond; it is focused on children, careers, friends, and community service. Each partner has a considerable amount of freedom to pursue individual interests and activities.

Because this type of marriage is not based on unrealistic romantic assumptions, it is often relatively stable and meets the utilitarian needs of the partners. Passive-congenial marriages are only threatened when these pragmatic needs are not being met.

Vital Marriage

Some marriages are based on an intense sharing and desire for togetherness. These vital marriages center around the pleasure of doing things *jointly*. The specific activities these couples engage in are less important than the fact that they are sharing important experiences.

Partners in vital marriages seem to say and do the same things. This is often a consequence of their spending time together talking over their interests and activities, and sharing similar views. Despite their similarities, they do not merge their total identities into the marriage; they still retain a sense of themselves as individuals. They are able to balance the investment of their identity in this emotionally important and rewarding relationship and in themselves as distinct individuals.

These couples truly enjoy each other. Their sex life is important and pleasurable, and continues to improve over the years. Vital marriages are not "storybook" marriages; conflict does occur. When it does, though, it is likely to be a result of important issues rather than the trivial ones that characterize conflict-habituated marriages. These conflicts are settled rather quickly rather than being allowed to continue and poison the relationship.

This type of marriage is relatively uncommon. Further, Cuber and Harroff indicate that those enjoying this relationship report that it is little understood by others.

Total Marriage

This is the rarest of the five types of marital relationships reported by Cuber and Harroff. Like the vital marriage, it is an intrinsic relationship but with even more extensive points of common interest and activities connecting the couple. The partners often share a common work experience, friends, and leisure pursuits as well as home and children.

These marriages are emotionally intense and intrinsic. The lives of the partners are intimately intertwined and the relationship is central to their existence. This emotional interdependence is the strength of total marriages.

At the same time, it is a potential danger; these marriages are vulnerable if this important quality is disrupted for any reason. Also, the loss of one of the partners is often an absolute disaster for the survivor.

THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Just as individuals, families have a *life cycle*, a set of stages in which the tasks and activities of the partners differ. While there is some disagreement among scholars of the family, most find the concept of a family life cycle a useful way to characterize changes in families over time. Some investigators have a seven-stage cycle, while others have an eight-stage cycle, and still others find different variations. For purposes of this section a five-stage scheme described by Saxton (1990: 264–271) is used.

The Married Couple: The Prechild Years

The first few years of marriage for most people are among the happiest. Few families return to the levels of satisfaction they achieve initially. Most marriages begin without children, and husbands and wives are able to focus solely on their own and their partners' needs and pleasure. They can pursue career or educational interests relatively unimpeded. While they are childless they have more time to devote to the necessary adjustments to one another and to their new relationship. Life at this time consists primarily of work/school and marriage.

The Young Family: The Childrearing Years

Children transform a married couple into a family. This is more than just a change in label; the very nature of the marital relationship changes with children. At a minimum, each partner now has two primary targets of time and attention compared with the previous one.

Children require effort, additional expenses, and a rearrangement of the parents' previous lifestyle. Picking up and going to the movie on whim is rarely possible for parents; baby-sitting arrangements must be made, and that is not always easy to do at a moment's notice. New demands accompany children. Someone has to stay with them; if not one of the parents, then some other person. Children get sick and need care; this, too, must be planned for. In short, a whole range of new considerations enters the marriage. It is not surprising that Fig. 10.1 shows a sharp reduction in marital satisfaction with the presence of children. However, whatever the drop in general levels of satisfaction, most parents find great joy in their children. Children are a source of love, pride, pleasure, and feelings of accomplishment.

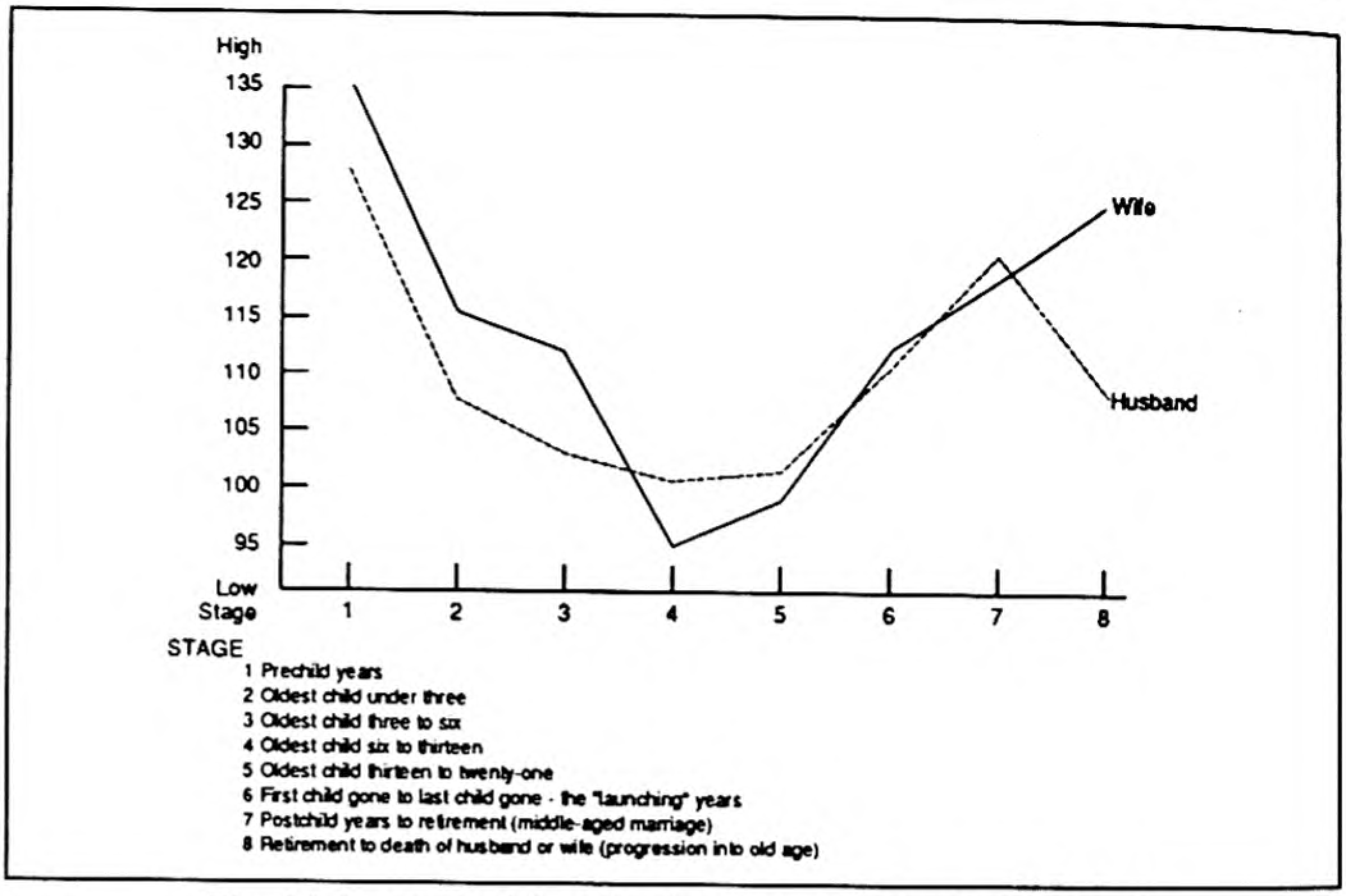

Fig. 10.1 Marital Satisfaction over the Family Life Cycle (Source: Spanier, Lewis, and Cole [1975:271]. Reprinted with permission of the National Council on Family Relations)

Levels of satisfaction continue to decrease as children reach adolescence. The teenage years are among the most difficult for parents. The autonomy needed and desired by adolescents challenges the patience and interpersonal skills of most parents. Teenagers need to test their ability to be independent, to make their own decisions, and to pursue their own interests. Often this requires separating themselves from the desires of their parents. This is not easy for either parents or adolescents.

As children reach their late teens the situation often improves. Some children leave home either for college or to establish themselves in a job. Either often provides a measure of independence that tends to moderate the conflict with parents. At this time many couples are doing reasonably well financially and this eases some burdens. Consequently, levels of satisfaction begin to rise (see Fig. 10.1).

The Middle-Aged Couple: The Postchild Years

Couples today spend about half their married lives without children at home. This is due to two factors—people are living longer and having their children over a shorter period of time. Levels of satisfaction continue to increase as the couple approximates the marital relationship they had at the beginning of their joint life.

This stage has been characterized as the *empty nest*, when all the children have grown up and left the parental home. It has popularly been described as a period of depression coupled with a sense of uselessness, especially for mothers. Whatever validity this view might have had for traditional families, contemporary research has consistently failed to find support for this view. As Fig. 10.1 demonstrates, levels of satisfaction continue to increase at this time. Furthermore, mothers evidence a sense of relief at the departure of their children.

Similarly, there is little support for the supposed "mid-life crisis." While a number of important changes take place at this time in the lives of most people, few experience it as a crisis; levels of satisfaction continue on their upswing at this time.

The Elderly Couple: The Retirement Years

Though the determination of "old age" is not simple, most people consider it beginning somewhere in the sixties. Popular belief has it that the health and intellectual functioning of older people are significantly and progressively declining. However, this is not consistently true of older people. Some do seem fragile and confused. However, most report being in reasonable health, and studies of their intellectual functioning suggest little consistent deterioration; in fact, some intellectual functions actually improve (Goodman, 1992: 167–169).

Old age and retirement do not automatically go together; some people retire earlier, and some work well into their seventies or even eighties. However, many retire while in their sixties, and retirement may lead to at least three problems. First, those who lack an adequate pension plan may find it difficult if not impossible to live comfortably on Social Security payments. It is also increasingly difficult to provide adequately for the rapidly spiraling costs of health care, despite the availability of Medicare and Medicaid. Second, retirement means the absence of a job, often the central focus of a person's life. Third, retirement and the likely loss of old friends to death reduces the older person's social circle and often leads to feelings of isolation.

There are apparent differences between older men and women. Fig. 10.1 shows that women's level of satisfaction continues to rise into old age while men's begins to decline. Presumably, this is because the sample consisted primarily of people with more traditional attitudes—husbands who worked and wives who stayed home. These women's key adjustments were required by the empty nest and were made well before old age. The men, however, now faced the problems of retirement described above.

Despite these problems, recent surveys (e.g., Lewis, 1989) indicate that most older people find great satisfaction at this period of their lives. They are less depressed and fearful than younger adults. Despite popular belief, sexual interest does not necessarily decrease significantly. Those active sexually throughout their lives continue their interest. Most senior citizens have and enjoy contact with their children and grandchildren at least once a week (Bengston, 1986), and the grandparent's role is both useful and enjoyable for many (Cherlin and Furstenberg, 1986). In short, the later years in life can be and apparently are satisfying.

Widowhood: Singlehood Revisited

BEREAVEMENT

Many people experience widowhood. *Bereavement*, the loss through death of someone close, is often accompanied by feelings of regret and guilt. The stress that results from the death of a spouse is considered devastating, the highest score on a scale of stress (Kagan and Haveman, 1980). This level of stress affects one's physical as well as mental well-being, leading to higher than average mortality rates among the widowed (Lynch, 1977).

REMARRIAGE

Young widows and widowers are likely to be able to remarry. Since women live longer than men, elderly widows tend to have few eligible partners for remarriage. In fact, widowers over the age of sixty-five have a remarriage rate about seven times higher than widows (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1988). Combined with the longer life span of women and the typical age differential between spouses, this remarriage rate leads to twice as many men as women over the age of sixty-five who are still married (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988b).

ADJUSTMENTS

Widowhood returns a woman to a life of singlehood. For many widows loneliness is probably the major problem they face. This is expressed in many different ways. Some women feel they are no longer an object of love, nor do they have anyone to love. Some feel angry toward friends who visit or socialize less frequently than before. Reorganizing daily tasks to take into account the partner's loss is often of help in dealing with loneliness.

Widowers tend to have more difficulty in adjusting to their new situation than do widows. To some extent this is because they are less able than widows to express their feelings of grief. Also, many are unable to take care of themselves, since they had previously had their domestic needs taken care of by their wives. Finally, widowers tend to be more socially isolated than widows.

Despite the problems they face, many of the widowed learn to make necessary adjustments in their lives. Some remarry, and research indicates that this improves their well-being and heightens their sense of self-esteem. Many of those who do not remarry, however, learn to cope with their situation and often develop useful social support networks to help them in this process.

All people enter marriage with a set of expectations. Despite a relatively high divorce rate, most people expect their marriage to be permanent. They also see marriage as their primary relationship and one of sexual exclusiveness. More than anything else, people expect marriage to bring them personal happiness and joy. Traditionally, society defined a set of social roles for each of the partners. Today, however, an increasing number of couples are redefining these traditional marital roles into those more flexible and individually negotiable. The notion of relatively predetermined marital roles is giving way to the more flexible concept of marital scripts. These scripts are also increasingly flexible, keeping marriages from becoming static and unresponsive to change.

People may undertake a "utilitarian marriage" because it meets some pragmatic needs or they may contract an "intrinsic marriage" because of the love and strong emotional attachment it brings. Utilitarian marriages are not well-received in American society, which stresses romantic love. However, the pragmatic nature of utilitarian marriages often leads to less unrealistic expectations about the relationship; such marriages are reasonably stable as long as the desired benefits continue.

There are several patterns of marriage relationship based on the adjustments people make to marriage and their conceptions of the relationship. These patterns range from the "conflict-habituated marriage," which involves considerable and continual conflict between partners, to the total marriage based on intensive emotional attachments and considerable sharing. There are several intermediate patterns that demonstrate the diversity of possible marital relationships.

The pattern of activities of the members vary at different stages in the family life cycle. The highest levels of reported satisfaction are during the first stage of marriage, before there are children. The arrival of children brings a series of changes into the life of the marital partners that serves to diminish their reported levels of satisfactions. The necessary demands for independence by adolescent children make this period in the family life cycle the most difficult. The postchild years of the middle-aged couple, however, sees a rise in levels of satisfaction and there is little evidence for the supposed trauma of the "empty nest" or the "midlife crisis." Despite the problems some have due to retirement, most older couples enjoy their lives at this time. However, a spouse's death leads to loneliness and social isolation for many. These situations are alleviated through remarriage, though this is more likely for widowers than widows. Even many of those who do not remarry eventually adjust to their new situation, reorganize their lives, and develop helpful support networks.

11

Communication, Power, and Conflict

Communication is central to the functioning of marriage. Power relationships and the decision-making process are also important to the institution. While partners expect and hope that marriage will be a joyful relationship, they must in reality deal with differences and conflict. This chapter considers the sources, forms, and modes of dealing with marital conflict.

COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE

The bonds of marriage are forged through the communication spouses have with each other. Communication allows them to share their hopes, fears, ideals, and assessments of their marriage. Communication plays a key role in establishing, maintaining, and dissolving a marriage.

Components of Communication

There are several components to consider in the process of communication.

THE MESSAGE

Content is primary to communication. The communicator wishes to express something to someone else. This content is the essential message of the communication and without it, communication is unnecessary.

THE CONTEXT

Communication occurs within a social context. An antisemitic joke told among Jews is quite different from one told in a group of people from dissimilar religions. An explanation of a husband's lateness is received differently the first time it happens than it is on the tenth such occasion. Context affects the reception of the message.

INTERPRETATION

Messages are intended to convey a particular meaning. However, the content does not "speak for itself;" it is interpreted by the receiver. This interpretation may or may not conform to the intent of the sender.

MODE

Communication occurs through different modes or channels. It occurs verbally through written or spoken words, and it can also occur through various nonverbal forms. While it may be that McLuhan's famous phrase "the medium is the message" is an overstatement, the mode of communication does play an important role in this process. For example, it is generally believed that nonverbal communication is less controlled by a person than his or her spoken words. If there is a difference between what is said and what is being conveyed nonverbally, the latter is more likely to influence interpretation (Burgoon, 1985).

NOISE

Some factors distort or interfere with communication. Called *noise*, these include additional sounds during communication or a lack of attention on the part of the receiver. The more noise, the less likely there will be effective communication.

The Content of Communication

Communication is used to transmit several types of messages. These messages involve various forms of expression.

OBSERVATIONS

Messages may reflect what communicators are receiving through their sense organs. A person hears or sees something and tries to transmit it to others. "It is raining" is such an observation. Generally, such a factual statement requires little speculation or interpretation.

THOUGHTS

These messages involve interpretations. They reflect what the sender may have seen, heard, or read. As interpretations, thoughts are often not neutral factual statements. They generally involve values and opinions of what has been observed (e.g., "I think our marriage is working").

FEELINGS

Feelings are among the most difficult things for most people to convey. They are generally considered private and tinged with danger, especially if they are negative. Socialization practices in the United States usually lead women to be more comfortable with emotions than are men. This difference has become a source of difficulty in some marriages.

NEEDS

Messages often convey the sender's needs. Without knowledge of a partner's needs, husbands and wives have to guess, and guessing wrong leads to hurt and conflict. Clear communication of needs can reduce ambiguity as a source of marital difficulty.

Nonverbal Communication

Communication takes place through verbal and nonverbal cues. This includes speech as well as various forms of "body language." Feelings are more often conveyed through nonverbal communication than through words. Nonverbal communication is also likely to be more ambiguous and more limited than verbal communication. In normal activities, verbal and nonverbal communication are intertwined. The meaning of communication in Goffman's terms is based both upon the signals people "give" (words) and those they "give off" (nonverbal cues).

PARALANGUAGE

Speech has a vocal or nonsemantic component separate from the meaning of the words used. It includes the speed, pitch, volume, and stress of what is being said. Listeners interpret communication using both its linguistic and paralinguistic aspects. Speaking rapidly and loudly, for example, often conveys excitement and enthusiasm. If someone says he or she is enthusiastic but speaks in a slow, quiet monotone many listeners will doubt the speaker's words.

Most of the time the paralinguistic aspects of communication are not intentional. This is the basis for assuming their greater validity when they conflict with the verbal message. However, sometimes people deliberately use paralinguistic forms to convey certain meaning. This intentional use of paralanguage to add a particular emphasis to speech is called a *metamessage.* Pounding on the table with a fist, for example, makes it clear to the listener that the speaker is angry.

BODY LANGUAGE

People also convey meaning in their body language. They use *gestures* in ways that have socially understood meaning. Facial expressions are a common form of gesture, accounting by one estimate (Mehrabian, 1968) for more than half of the meaning conveyed through communication.

Body language is also conveyed through posture and use of space. People show interest in what is being said by leaning toward the speaker (Mehrabian, 1972). They also stand closer to those they like, though there are cultural differences in the definition of "personal space" that surrounds each individual.

To conclude, communication is a complex process that uses both verbal and nonverbal forms to convey meaning. The closeness and intimacy of marriage increases the likelihood that partners will be sensitive to the communication patterns of each other and thus be more efficient in the process (Goodman and Ofshe, 1968).

The Process of Communication

Communication is an ongoing series of activities that involves a sender and a receiver. This dynamic process has been characterized by Bedeian (1986) as occurring in steps.

ELEMENTS IN COMMUNICATION

Sender. The first three steps in communication are taken by the sender.

1. *Ideation*, having something to communicate, is a necessary first step. This can be an observation, thought, feeling or need.
2. *Encoding*, translating the ideation into symbols likely to be understood by the receiver, is the second step in this process. Language is the most frequently used encoding medium.
3. *Transmitting* the encoded information completes the initial actions of the sender. The mode of transmission might be oral, written or via paralinguistic.

Receiver. The receiver plays a four-step role in this process.

1. *Reception* of the message is necessary if communication is to proceed. If spoken, the message must be heard; if written, it must be read.
2. *Decoding* is the next task of the receiver. Interpretation is an act of decoding.
3. *Understanding* is a result of an accurate decoding of the message. It is accomplished when the thought, feeling or need of the sender has been grasped.
4. *Feedback* tells the sender that the message has been received and how it has been interpreted. This feedback process is critical and demonstrates that accurate communication involves a two-way flow of understood information.

Feedback that confirms the original intention is called *convergent feedback* and generally brings predictable results. *Divergent feedback*, in which the interpretation is inconsistent with the sender's intentions, leads to unexpected behavior. In some ways divergent feedback is more useful in marital communication since it can make partners aware of differences in views that may not have been obvious.

Patterns of Ineffective Communication

A number of years ago Satir (1972) pointed to four particularly ineffective, even destructive, types of communicators. Though she cast these as personality types, they can also be viewed as different patterns of communication.

BLAMING

This is a pattern of fault-finding used by "petty dictators" who do not listen to what anyone else has to say. They often do not consider other people's feelings and cut them down to enhance their own status. This communicative style is often shrill and loud. This style shifts the focus of communication to what the other is doing wrong, putting that person on the defensive.

PLACATING

This style is almost the opposite of the first. It involves listening carefully to the partner and trying to please, despite the placater's own views. This martyr-like communication pattern does not generally lead to mutually satisfying communication because it is based on avoiding conflict rather than communicating truthfully. It is never clear what the placater truly believes, and a consistent placating pattern by one partner, Satir argues, can lower the self-esteem of both.

DISTRACTING

In this pattern, one partner inhibits communication by responding with something that is irrelevant, changing the topic or failing to reply at all. This pattern deflects the intention of the initiator. It does not permit the substance of the communication to be heard. Being ignored tends to lower the initiator's self-esteem.

COMPUTING

Communications that are excessively rational, logical, and emotionally controlled simulate a computer. People using this style speak in a dry, flat monotone. They ignore feelings and deal with abstract, rational analysis. This pattern often leaves the listener frustrated and angry, helpless to communicate the depth of feelings involved.

Effective Communication

There are no simple formulas for communicating effectively with others, especially marital partners. However, Davidson and Moore (1992) have summarized some key elements of effective communication from the growing literature on this topic.

MAINTAIN A "SAFE" CLIMATE

A secure relationship is essential. People should not feel threatened by what their partner is saying. Each should give attention, recognition, and praise to the partner. This contributes to a positive sense of the relationship, making it a safe harbor in which even difficult things can be discussed.

BE A GOOD LISTENER

People need to listen to as well as hear what their partner is saying. Listening requires attention and interpretation. People should not feel the need to interrupt to defend themselves. Interruptions tend to distract from understanding the underlying feelings.

SELF-DISCLOSE

Effective communication requires a willingness by people to share real thoughts and feelings. Nowhere is this more important than in intimate relationships.

DIFFER, ARGUE, AND CONFRONT

Avoiding discussions of differences does not resolve them. Differences must be confronted and discussed if they are not to fester, grow larger, and threaten the relationship. Even touchy subjects need to be discussed. In a good relationship nothing should be a taboo topic. There are ways of differing, even arguing, that can be constructive and useful to a relationship.

Communication, then, is a vehicle through which the "business" of marriage is carried out. It is involved in the process of making decisions that are central to marriage as well as in the conflict, and its resolution, that are common to intimate relationships.

CONJUGAL POWER AND DECISION MAKING

All relationships involve decision making. How decisions are made depends to some extent on the power relationships of the participants. *Power* is the ability to accomplish one's aims despite the resistance of others. The exercise of this power in marriage Clayton (1979) called *conjugal power*. There are various theories of conjugal power.

Early Theories

Though the recent feminist movement placed the issue of conjugal power at the forefront of family research, scientific efforts to study marital decision making can be traced to an earlier period.

THE RESOURCE THEORY

Though by no means the first or best study of decision making in marriage, research by Blood and Wolfe (1960) was influential. They perceived that the traditional patriarchal marital power relationship in American society had shifted to a more egalitarian form. Power, they argued, results from the social resources of the marital partners. Occupation is particularly important because it affects the income that a partner contributes to the family.

Traditionally, husbands worked and wives tended to the home and children. In this circumstance, husbands made most of the decisions in the family. However, when wives also work outside the home, their conjugal power increases. Wives who work full-time have more conjugal power than those who work part-time; those who work part-time have more conjugal power than those who do not work at all outside the home. Education and age likewise confer power in marriage. Thus, white-collar husbands were reported as having a greater say in family decisions than blue-collar husbands.

In examining the overall pattern, Blood and Wolfe found that in seventy-two percent of their sample of Detroit housewives, conjugal power was shared in the "divided power" model. When power was concentrated in one of the partners it was most often the husband (twenty-five percent) rather than the wife (three percent).

The Blood and Wolfe study has been severely criticized on a number of grounds. For example, the study determined family power by asking who made the final decision on eight different areas of marriage (e.g., which car to buy, whether or not to buy life insurance, which doctor to call when someone is sick). There are three problems with this formulation. First, power is not necessarily revealed by who makes the final decision. The weaker person in a marriage may actually make a decision based on the assumption or anticipation of the preference of the stronger partner. Second, conjugal power is more than who makes the final decision; the process of decision making is a complex one, and was not analyzed in this study. Third, all decisions were given equal weight when in fact some are more important than others.

Blood and Wolfe were also criticized for interviewing only wives. Some research has demonstrated that husbands and wives do not always agree on what has occurred in their marriage (Brim, et al., 1962; Bernard, 1982: 26–53). With specific reference to decision making, Monroe et al. (1985) found that questioning only one spouse misrepresents the situation in about a quarter of couples.

RESOURCES IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

Blood and Wolfe's (1960) view that social resources lead to conjugal power did not consider cultural differences. Other investigators (e.g., Rodman, 1970) argue that while resources do confer power, what constitutes a usable resource depends on the cultural values of the group. In some countries, Greece and Yugoslavia, for example, Rodman found that high income and education was associated with *less* conjugal power for men; one possible explanation for this difference is that these husbands are more liberal and yield more of their traditional decision-making authority to their wives.

In addition, a society or social group may have strong traditional patriarchal traditions that do not change even as more women enter the labor force and acquire higher levels of education. This is evident in a study (Cooney, et al., 1982) of the distribution of conjugal power in U.S. Puerto Rican families consisting of husbands and wives born and raised in Puerto Rico.

In short, the cultural context plays a critical role in the distribution of marital power. It not only defines marriage as either an egalitarian or unequal relationship but also invests specific social characteristics with the ability to influence conjugal power relationships.

EXCHANGE THEORY

The previous theories focus primarily on social characteristics that contribute to conjugal power. Building on Waller and Hill (1951), Heer (1963) argues that there are a variety of interpersonal characteristics that can be "exchanged" for conjugal power. Physical attractiveness is one such quality. The beautiful wife and handsome husband have an attribute that is considered desirable. It serves as a resource that provides them access to the marketplace, hence giving them an alternative to remaining in the existing marriage. This alternative gives them some measure of conjugal power, since if either one is unhappy, he or she can always leave the relationship.

There are also interpersonal skills that can be exchanged for a measure of conjugal power. Sharing necessary household tasks, providing a warm and nurturing emotional climate, and contributing to a satisfactory sexual relationship are among the attributes that can be traded for conjugal power. These characteristics serve to smooth the functioning of the marriage and thus make the person important to the relationship. Importance increases power.

The previous two theories dealt with resources external to marriage. Exchange theory focuses on those interrelationship characteristics and skills that can be swapped or bartered for conjugal power, either because they make the person more marketable outside the marriage or because they contribute to the success of this very intimate relationship.

Contemporary Views of Conjugal Power

The resource theories of power are generally rooted in traditional conceptions of gender roles. The changing nature of gender roles in American society has led to a reexamination of power relations between men and women.

GENDER AND POWER

Despite recent changes that have equalized power relations between men and women, men still tend to dominate social relationships. They are particularly powerful in the public sphere of social life. However, women tend to have more power inside the private sphere of intimate relationships. The connection between gender and power in the family is in large part due to the link between gender and power in society at large, as suggested by the resource theory. Consequently, attempts to change the balance of power in the family will depend in part on changes in society's conception of gender and marriage.

Equal Status for Men and Women in the Public Sphere. This situation would allow women to acquire the social resources that enhance conjugal power. This includes attention to the special problems women have balancing occupational and family responsibilities in American society.

An Increase in Value of Women's Traditional Qualities. The increase in society's evaluation of emotional support and nurturance would add to women's interpersonal bases of conjugal power. To some extent, some of these values traditionally ascribed to women are already being incorporated into American culture.

Substantial Support for the Norms of Gender Equality. Normal gender equality in marriage would contribute to the equalization of conjugal power regardless of the different resources available to men and women. There is evidence that this trend toward equality between men and women has been increasing recently, though equality has not yet been achieved.

MARITAL CONFLICT

The Typicality of Conflict

The course of true love rarely runs smoothly. Despite the high expectations that most people have, conflict occurs in all intimate relationships, including marriage. Several factors contribute to this situation.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MARITAL CONFLICT

The Intimate Nature of Marriage. The close tie between marital partners makes them especially sensitive to each other and vulnerable as well. Their lives are intertwined, and their self-disclosure and openness put them at emotional risk.

Gender Differences in Perspectives. The process of socialization in American society leads men and women to look at many aspects of life differently. These different perspectives occasionally become the basis of conflict.

Individual Uniqueness. Each person is unique. Partners are not clones of each other. Over and above gender differences, there are dissimilarities due to the specific personal experiences each partner has had. One partner may have been raised to be outgoing in social activities, the other more restrained. These differences can lead to conflict.

Differential Growth. No person remains static. However, people change in different ways and at different rates. Two partners may start off equally assertive in joint social activities. Over time, however, one partner may gain more self-confidence and become more assertive while the other retreats to the background. This new gap in social skills and interests may engender marital conflict.

Changing Social Contexts. As people change, so does their social context. Partners may not respond similarly to social change. For example, women and men may react differently to the increasing trend toward gender equality. The husband may approve of his wife going to work and being an equal partner in family decision making, while the wife might be quite content to have him provide for her. Of course the reverse is also true—and perhaps more frequently the case.

Marital conflict is inevitable because of the nature of intimate relationships, individuality, and changing identity in the social world. Common sources lead to conflict in marriage.

Frequent Sources of Marital Conflict

The sources of conflict in marriage today are somewhat different from those about two generations ago. At that time Landis and Landis (1963: 287–290) noted seven common problems in marriage: sex, money, children, in-laws, social activities, friends, and religion. Today some of the same factors persist, others have become less important, and new ones have gained prominence. It is unlikely that any single factor will produce serious marital conflict unless it continues for some duration.

INTIMACY ISSUES

Two common facets of marriage that typically generate conflict are sex and the level of demonstrated affection. The issue of marital sexuality will be explored in chapter 12; however, differences over the frequency of sexual intercourse, the proper way to satisfy both partners, and the setting in which sex takes place may become issues in a marriage. There are typical gender as well as individual differences around these concerns that may lead to conflict.

Similarly, the proper level and manner of expressing affection can produce conflict. Some people may prefer more frequent demonstrations of affection than the partner provides. Some prefer public demonstrations, while others prefer that affection remain private. Affection and intimacy are central to marriage; thus any unhappiness with them threatens disagreement and more serious conflict.

DIFFERENCES IN BASIC VALUES

Endogamy and homogamy serve to reduce differences in basic values between partners. They do not, however, eliminate all differences. Some people marry in spite of clear differences on important values; they do so in the hope that their partner will change. Differences in values that are considered important to the person or the relationship also lead to conflict.

DIFFERENCES IN ROLE EXPECTATIONS

Conflict is also likely when partners disagree on marital roles. These differences may have existed before the marriage or may have developed afterwards. Since marital roles are reciprocal, lack of agreement causes confusion and eventually conflict.

Kirkpatrick (1955) described three different roles that wives play—the "wife-and-mother" role, the "companion" role, and the "partner" role. Each of these roles carries with it certain rights and privileges as well as certain obligations. He defined a problem he called "ethical inconsistency," such as a wife desiring the rights of a particular role without accepting the corresponding obligations, or a husband demanding that his wife fulfill the obligations of one of the roles but not granting her the corresponding rights. These mismatches are examples of differences in role expectations that are likely to generate conflict.

POWER STRUGGLES AND COMPETITION

A major characteristic of traditional families has been the separate spheres of influence and power exerted by husbands and wives. Men were responsible for providing for the economic security of the family while the wife was in charge of the home and children. Each could gain status and self-esteem in these separate endeavors independently of the other.

One effect of the feminist movement has been to weaken the barriers between the separate spheres of influence and status. As advantageous as this has been in general, it has also put more husbands and wives in the same competitive arena. In an increasing number of families, women's jobs are considered as important as men's, and husbands are expected to play a significant role in domestic and childcare tasks. Conflicts can no longer be solved by allowing the "head" of that sphere to determine what is to be done. The consequence in some families is an increase in conflict, especially in this transition period. New conceptions of lines of authority in the family are currently in process, and transitional states are often full of confusion, pain, and conflict.

MONEY

A continuing source of conflict in marriage is money. There are several issues involved. How to define the amount of money needed for the family to enjoy a particular lifestyle may be a source of contention. Who decides on how the money is to be spent is often another problem. The use of credit, either through bank loans or credit cards, emerges as a particular problem in difficult economic times. Moreover, in American society money has great symbolic significance. Its acquisition and use is often taken to represent love, power or status and thus it commands importance well beyond its economic value.

CHILDREN

Children are occasionally a source of conflict in families. Initially they may generate discord over their very presence or absence if the couple has not decided whether or how many children to have. Once born, children become a source of conflict when they change the nature of the intimate relationship of marriage.

Differences in views about childrearing also generate conflict. Gender differences in childrearing practices are common, especially regarding discipline. Historically, fathers have been more task-oriented and mothers more emotionally supportive. The increasing involvement of fathers in the parenting role has moderated these earlier differences.

"TREMENDOUS TRIFLES"

Little annoyances can take on unwarranted importance. The husband who leaves hairs in the sink after shaving or the wife who is late for a dinner engagement may generate a degree of conflict out of proportion to the "infraction" involved. It is the consistency of these irritations and their presence at times in which there are other difficulties in the marriage that give them the power to cause conflict.

STAGNATION AND BOREDOM

Some people simply get bored with the routine in marriage. They believe they are stagnating rather than growing and developing as individuals. The presumed but undocumented "seven year itch" stems from the view that marriages take this amount of time to settle into a boring routine. To deal with this problem, Jourard (1971) provides a number of suggestions for what he calls "reinventing" marriage.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In some families excessive use of alcohol and/or other drugs becomes a bone of contention. In fact, alcoholism has often been cited as one of the most frequent causes of divorce. Substance abuse is also a sign of stress.

However, the use of alcohol or other drugs does not eliminate the source of stress. These behaviors diminish the emotional bonds among family members and weaken the trust and confidence in one another that is central to intimate relationships. Substance abuse weakens the family's economic base by affecting the employment of the abuser and the use of the family's financial resources. It may also bring social stigma to the family.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Various external factors may generate conflict. Natural disasters—such as floods and earthquakes—and social disasters—such as war and recession—may put sufficient strain on marriages to cause conflict.

In-laws are a common target of comedians' jokes. They are often portrayed as the cause of conflict in marriage. Parents-in-law may be a source of marital conflict, though less often then many people believe. Most parents tend to overvalue their own child and may not think their child's spouse is good enough. Some parents are jealous of the loss of attention they undergo as a result of their child's marriage. And some parents continue to see their child as a child, while the spouse sees the partner as an adult with adult responsibilities and commitments. This difference may also cause friction.

Forms of Conflict: The Military Metaphor

Conflict can take many forms. One method of looking at the variety of ways in which conflict is manifested is to use the language of military conflict. The adoption of the language of warfare is not meant to imply that marital and military conflict are identical, only that the language to describe one is useful in describing the other. They are not necessarily equivalent.

GUERRILLA WARFARE

In military conflict this style involves inflicting a series of small wounds on the enemy in hopes of making it too painful or costly to continue the war. This may involve small-scale raids on supply depots, oil installations, or military barracks. In marital conflict constant quarreling, belittling of the partner, and nagging serve a similar purpose. They inflict a series of small wounds that have a cumulative effect. They often reduce the strength of the marital bond.

BLITZKRIEG

This German word refers to a sudden, swift military offensive. It seems to come out of nowhere and is over very suddenly. In marriage, this form is evidenced in the sudden shouting match that may erupt without warning and is quickly ended. It is short, swift, and disrupting.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

In war, one side often attempts to disorient the other, to throw them off stride. This is aimed at lowering their morale and weakening their resolve to pursue the war. Marital conflict can take this form and have similar effects. Neurotic illnesses which constrain the partner from taking unwanted action are one form of conflict. An example is the spouse who suddenly becomes ill when the partner is set to leave on a business trip. Another example is a spouse who is submissive, assuring a partner that his or her activity is perfectly acceptable when it is not.

STAND-OFF ATTACK

Any use of weapons to inflict damage to an enemy from afar exemplifies this form of military conflict. There is no direct, face-to-face engagement of the enemy. In marriage, this same style is often accomplished by flirtations and infidelities. Not all such actions are a form of conflict, but some infidelities are deliberately engaged in on the assumption that the spouse will find out and be hurt by them. This is an indirect and "distant" form of conflict.

SIEGE

In military terms, a siege refers to the encirclement or blockade of a target—usually a city—town or village. The blockade prevents the target from having access to the goods and services it has had customarily available to meet its needs, such as food, fuel, and water. In marriage, the withholding of responses that are routinely expected is a form of conflict similar to a siege. It may involve the "silent treatment," the withholding of sexual receptiveness or warm and supportive companionship.

DIRECT FRONTAL ASSAULT

Soldiers may engage the enemy directly and visibly through weapons fire and hand-to-hand combat. The two sides confront each other and inflict noticeable physical harm. The analogy in marriage is physical violence (see chapter 18).

The Conflict Process

Most conflict is a process that occurs over time, with a beginning, middle, and end.

STAGES IN THE CONFLICT PROCESS

Beginnings. Something must trip off a conflict. Though there may be unhappiness, conflict rarely just flares up without some initiating event. The precipitating cause may be the partner's criticism of some action. Sometimes the initiating event is less important than the cumulative annoyance and anger that may have been building beforehand.

The Middle. At some point a conflict takes one of two directions. It can lead to discussion, negotiation, and resolution of the issues involved. Productive resolution of marital conflict is discussed below. A conflict can also escalate and intensify. This often involves threats, deception, manipulation, and attribution of blame. Sometimes conciliatory acts or statements tone down the escalation and put it on the road to discussion, negotiation, and resolution.

Endings. Most conflicts end. An unhappy ending may involve a breaking of the relationship or sufficient damage that will have a long-lasting negative effect. Turner and Helms (1988: 263–264) identify five forms of relationship terminations from the most negative to the most positive.

1. *Separation*, either temporary or permanent, without a resolution of the conflict is usually not an effective way to deal with conflict. Occasionally, a "cooling off" period is useful, but only infrequently and for a short time.
2. *Domination* of one partner by another is another negative form, especially if there is one person who consistently dominates the other.
3. *Compromise* requires a trade-off on the issue, one with which both parties feel comfortable. Both partners can either give in or modify their initial wishes or demands. This form of interpersonal relations is essential to the success of any intimate relationship.
4. *Integrative agreements* meet the goals of both partners simultaneously. The difficulty in reconciling truly divergent interests makes this an uncommon but still useful form of conflict resolution.
5. *Structural improvement* in the relationship may well be an outcome of marital conflict. New rules for the marriage may be forged out of the fires of conflict, bringing increased happiness and satisfaction to both partners.

Dealing with Marital Conflict

Conflict is not always bad. Coser (1956, 1967) has pointed out the positive functions for society of social conflict. The same may be said for marital conflict. In fact, creative resolution of marital conflict is both a challenge and a necessity (Crosby, 1991).

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

It is important to clarify the issue around which a conflict occurs. Cumulative unhappiness may be tapped by a particular event, but the initiating activity is not the major problem. Sometimes several problems are involved and it is important to isolate them and deal with them separately if possible.

SHOW RESPECT FOR PARTNER

This creates a climate within which conflict is more likely to be settled. Appreciation of legitimate differences by the parties make it more likely that some adjustment can be worked out. If fighting does occur, it should incorporate respect and consideration for the people involved. Fair fights are possible.

NEGOTIATE A CHANGE

Marital conflict is a signal of differences. Many differences can be compromised or accommodated. The process of negotiating a satisfactory adjustment requires the partners to cooperate and actually make joint decisions. The imposition of a solution by one partner is not likely to last.

EVALUATE THE CHANGE

After establishing some change in the behavior of the partners in a relationship, it is useful to evaluate the continuing effects. Are the negotiated changes continuing? Do they continue to be an effective solution to the original conflict? Have they led to other unanticipated problems? This review of the resolution serves as a useful feedback mechanism for the marital partners.

Communication is integral to marriage. As a process, it consists of a sender who transmits a message in a particular mode and social context, and a receiver who interprets the message. "Noise" distorts or makes it difficult for messages to be received.

Nonverbal communication involves paralanguage, body language, and gestures. It is often assumed that since nonverbal communication is less under people's control it is more reflective of their actual intent than the words they use.

Communication is not always an effective interpersonal process. Four ineffective patterns of communication are blaming, placating, distracting, and computing. Each deflects the communication process in different ways and prevents understanding between marital partners.

Conjugal power has been explained on the basis of the external social resources that affect a marriage. This resource theory was qualified to make it clear that different societies and social groups disagree over what is considered a social resource; resources, in other words, occur in a cultural context. There are interpersonal resources that are exchangeable for conjugal power. Recent changes in social conceptions of gender roles have affected the distribution of conjugal power.

Conflict occurs in all intimate relationships, including marriage. The intimacy of the relationship and gender differences make some form of conflict in marriage inevitable. The uniqueness of each partner, different rates and direction of growth, and the changing social context also contribute to the likelihood of marital conflict.

Though each couple's experience is somewhat different, there are a number of common issues around which marital conflict occurs. Forms of marital conflict can be seen as similar to forms of military conflict.

Conflict has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In the middle, conflict can either escalate and intensify or be redirected toward negotiation and resolution. But all marital conflicts end, some more productively than others. Effective resolution of marital conflict occurs in the context of mutual respect; the specific problem is identified and an appropriate change effected. This change is monitored and evaluated to insure it's continuing usefulness. Successful conflict resolution can strengthen marriage.

12

Sexuality After Marriage

Satisfactory marital sex is an essential element of a successful marriage. The sexual experience of marriage is different for classes of people. There are a variety of myths surrounding marital sexuality. This chapter will consider the relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction along with the nature and characteristics of extramarital sexuality.

THE SEXUAL TIE IN MARRIAGE

Marriage has an undeniable sexual component, perhaps the central factor that distinguishes it from other types of intimate relationships. While marriage entails other activities, the sexual tie is one of its central bonds (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983). Sex produces pleasure, emotional affirmation, and often children. It can create conflict, but also heal wounds. It may add excitement and zest to marriage or become one of a number of important but routine activities.

DIFFERENCES IN MARITAL SEXUALITY

Though few would dispute the centrality of sexual activity to marriage, its form varies with the social characteristics of the partners.

Differences by Age and Marital Duration

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

In general, younger couples engage in sexual intercourse more frequently than older couples. This difference is reported both in earlier studies (e.g., Kinsey, et al., 1948; 1953) and in more recent research (e.g., Udry, 1980; Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983). These age differences reflect the duration of marriage, since older couples have been, by and large, married longer. Greenblat's (1983) research is consistent with this view. She finds that in the first year of marriage sexual intercourse occurs on the average about fifteen times a month. By the sixth year the average frequency has dropped to six times a month.

Jasso (1985), however, has demonstrated that the decrease in frequency over time is not simple and continuous. She shows that the frequency of coital activity decreases in the first two to three years after marriage; it then increases quickly for the next several years to a peak between the sixth and tenth year of marriage, declining slowly thereafter.

The exact nature of the relationship of sexual frequency and duration of marriage is clearly complex, and research in this area is not always in agreement. However, the study by Frank and Anderson (1980) of 100 couples provides an apt general summary. They found three identifiable sexual stages in marriage.

During the *early years, years of satisfaction*, sex is pleasurable, satisfying, and frequent.

The *middle years, years of distraction*, see a lessening of sexual frequency and enjoyment caused by the stresses of adult life.

The *later years, years of tenderness*, involve considerably reduced sexual frequency and increased dissatisfaction. However, most older couples assign less importance to the sexual aspects of marriage than younger couples and thus are less upset by the changes that occur.

MASTURBATION

Despite the belief that access to a marital sexual partner eliminates the need for masturbation, the facts are otherwise. In one study, *both* partners (ages eighteen to thirty-two) reported engaging in masturbation (Aldridge, 1983), husbands considerably more frequently than wives (Davidson, 1985). The practice is more common among younger men and women.

Differences by Social Class

FREQUENCY

Social class seems to have no effect on the frequency of sexual intercourse. However, there is considerable variation by social class in the nature of the coital experience.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SEX

Middle-class couples are much more likely to engage in sexual intercourse completely nude and in a lighted room. These differences were noted by Kinsey et al. (1948: 363–374; 1953: 399–400), and by Westoff (1974) more than a generation later. Couples in the higher social classes are also likely to use a wider variety of coital positions in their lovemaking and to engage more frequently in oral-genital sex. Though the differences between the social classes have narrowed somewhat since the 1960s and 1970s, they have not been eliminated.

EXPLANATIONS

The class differences in coital style are due to several factors. Working-class homes are often smaller and more crowded than those of the upper classes, allowing less privacy and requiring more careful scheduling and restraint. Perhaps more important is the greater adherence to traditional sexual and gender norms in the working class. People here are much more likely to see sex as the privilege of the man but the obligation of the woman; variations from tradition to please the woman are not frequent. The sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s affected marital sexuality as well as premarital sexuality, but its effects were more pronounced in the higher social classes.

Differences by Gender

Gender does affect the *desired* frequency of sexual activity. In general, men prefer intercourse more frequently than do their wives, though this difference has narrowed more recently. There are also gender differences in masturbation rates among the married. Married men masturbate about five times more frequently than their wives, on average about 11.0 times a month to their wives' 2.5 times (Davidson, 1985). Women report that they engage in masturbation primarily to release tension, as an enjoyable addition to intercourse, or because the intercourse was unfulfilling; only a few report it as a form of sexual experimentation (Tavris and Sadd, 1977).

Most married people report having sexual fantasies, including during marital intercourse. There is conflicting evidence as to whether it is more frequent for husbands or for wives. Sexual fantasies are used by both men and women for sexual arousal and to achieve orgasm. However, the sexual fantasies of wives tend to be more romantic than those of their husbands. The five "favorite" fantasies for wives are, in order of use: (1) reliving a memorable sexual experience; (2) engaging in extramarital sex; (3) having sex with their current partner; (4) having sex with a new partner; and (5) using a different coital position. For men, the fantasies involve: (1) using a different position for intercourse; (2) having sex with a new partner; (3) engaging in oral-genital sex; (4) engaging in extramarital sex; and (5) having their partner become the sexual aggressor.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT MARITAL SEXUALITY

Persistent and inaccurate myths surround marital sexual experience. A number of these myths and the relevant facts about marital sex have been usefully summarized by Talmadge (1985).

Marital Sex Is "Natural"

In this myth marriage brings with it an automatic understanding of sex and how to please oneself and one's partner. No problems can affect the sexual experience. Clearly this is not the case. Job problems, children, fatigue, and marital difficulties all affect the quality of marital sexuality. Furthermore, Landis and Landis (1963: 287–288) showed that sexual adjustment in marriage took the longest time to achieve of the seven common problems faced by couples. Though the changes in sexual attitudes and practices might render the Landis and Landis research obsolete today, their study demonstrates the necessity of learning to accomplish satisfactory marital sex.

Frequency of Coitus Indicates Compatibility and Happiness

Earlier it was pointed out that frequency of intercourse was related to various aspects of the family life cycle and the other roles the partners play. The number of times a couple engages in coitus was shown to vary considerably even over the first few years of marriage (e.g, Greenblat, 1983; Jasso, 1985). This variation is unrelated to sexual compatibility, which is not as variable. Frequency is especially susceptible to mood fluctuations and fatigue, which are generally independent of a couples' feeling of sexual compatibility or marital happiness. In short, frequency of coitus is sensitive to transitory factors that do not necessarily reflect the quality of the marital or the sexual relationship.

Poor Marital Sex Leads to Unhappy Marriages and Infidelity

This view assumes not just the importance but the *centrality* of sexual activity to marriage. The myth suggests that if people are not satisfied with their marital sexual experiences they will be unhappy in their marriage. Even more, they will seek satisfactory sex in relationships outside of marriage. There is, in fact, no such simple relationship between satisfactory marital sex and the happiness of a marriage. This complex connection is discussed later in the chapter.

Marital Sex and the Marital Relationship Are Separate

According to this myth there is no connection between marital sex and the rest of the marriage experience. Partners can share a very satisfying sexual relationship in a very bad marriage. Conversely, even in a very good marriage the partners may have an unsatisfying sexual relationship. The relationship between success in bed and success in other areas of marriage is complex. However, it is necessary to indicate here that the two are connected and do not exist isolated from one another in most marriages.

The Sexual Experience Creates Intimacy

The assumption underlying this myth is that marital coitus automatically creates intimacy between partners. This view is implied by referring to sexual intercourse as "intimate." However, there are a variety of factors that foster intimacy; communication and self-disclosure are two. While a positive sexual experience contributes to feelings of intimacy, it does not alone create it. Furthermore, an argument can be made that feelings of intimacy *lead* to sexual intercourse, not the other way around.

Happily Married Couples Do Not Experience Sexual Problems

This myth presumes that happiness in marriage is all-encompassing. All marriages have problems, even happy marriages. In some of these happy marriages the problems may involve sex. Chapter 10 pointed to the changing nature of marriage over time. The impact of children, job requirements and stress, and other factors may also cause sexual problems for happily married couples. Children and jobs often drain energy, induce fatigue, and reduce available time for privacy. These problems cause some level of difficulty for many couples, even those who are happily married.

Being Attractive and Meeting the Partner's Needs Guarantee a Satisfactory Marital Sexual Relationship

In this view, the basis of creating and maintaining a satisfying sexual relationship in marriage is located solely within the two individuals and their ability to please one another. It takes no account of activities which occur outside of the marriage or even within the family but outside of the marital bond. This myth is fostered in advertisements that suggest a romantic approach and wearing the "right" products will guarantee satisfying sex and marital happiness.

Marital Sex Is Always Romantic, Exciting, and Results in an Orgasm

This is the myth of the young, whether for marriage or cohabitation. Sex is seen as a constantly exciting adventure, embedded in romance, and leading to orgasmic release. In reality, marital sex is more likely to be routinized and ritualized, to bring joy and satisfaction to the partners, but not constantly at the level implied by this myth. In many respects, sex becomes a choreographed act with partners doing what they have learned brings satisfaction to themselves and the other. Occasionally, these acts rise to the level of a "peak experience," but mostly they are enjoyable and pleasurable at a lower level of excitement.

SEXUAL SATISFACTION AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

Several of the myths discussed above point to the relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction. Contrary to popular views, there is a complex and dynamic relationship between these two types of satisfaction.

An Interactive Relationship

There is no simple causal connection between sexual and marital satisfaction. It cannot be said that one always "causes" or leads to the other. In general, the happier the marriage the more likely the partners will develop and enjoy a satisfying sexual relationship. And a pleasurable marital sexual relationship contributes to feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction with the marriage. The two are intimately intertwined, though both are affected by other factors in the marriage. Basically, good sex is both a product of and a contributor to a good marriage. However, there are differences between men and women in the primary causal direction of the elements of this interactive pattern.

Gender Differences

Men are more likely to require a satisfying sexual experience in order to call their marriage satisfactory. Women's sexual responsiveness, on the other hand, often derives from their satisfaction with the quality of their marriage. Thus the interactive relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction is both similar and different for men and women. It is similar in the sense that for both men and women the lack of one of these factors will lead to a lack of the other. The difference is in which comes first in importance. For men, sexual satisfaction is the more important; for women, it is satisfaction with the total marriage relationship.

These differences parallel the different views of marriage described in a number of the earlier chapters. In a relationship, sexuality is more central to men while intimacy is more important for women. However, the gender differences that Udry (1980) reports suggest an important consideration in attempts to improve a marital relationship. Husbands who may be dissatisfied with their marital sexual relationship need to look for improvements in the overall tone of the marriage. The perceived sexual unresponsiveness of their wives is likely to be due to their unhappiness with other facets of the marriage. Identification of these problems and remedying them will likely increase the sexual responsiveness of wives.

Wives who are not happy with their husbands' contributions to the marriage may, in light of Udry's findings, devote some attention to increasing their partners' sexual satisfaction. Men's sexual contentment is likely to lead to their greater marital satisfaction; this, in turn, will encourage husbands to work for their wives' marital satisfaction. The wives' marital satisfaction will make them sexually more responsive and hence increase the sexual satisfaction of their husbands.

Pattern over Time

The relationship of sexual and marital satisfaction is dynamic; it changes over the course of marriage. These two forms of satisfaction are probably most closely linked in early marriage when the sexual aspect of the relationship is generally more central. Throughout marriage other issues in addition to sexuality are also important components of success. The establishment of a home, the raising of children, and the sharing of companionship and intimacy play an increasing role in facilitating a good marriage. Each factor becomes less critical on its own to the success of a marriage.

A balanced marriage is rarely ruled by success or failure in one of these areas. More often, each of them contributes to marital satisfaction. The strength of the relationship between any of these factors and marital success will vary over the course of the marriage.

SEXUALITY AND POWER

When two partners invest the same importance to the sexual side of their marriage, they are less likely to engage in power games. However, if there is a substantial difference in attitude toward marital sexuality, issues of power may surface. Coitus is unique among marital activities in that it requires *joint* participation. Couples can compromise on other activities; for example, one person can cook, the other can clean or they can alternate the tasks. No such compromise is easily available for coitus; sexual satisfaction requires both partners to play a role simultaneously.

Power in Marital Sexuality

SEXUAL DOMINATION

Differences in sexual desire can lead to power games as each partner attempts to dominate the activity. Sexual participation may be used to manipulate or control the partner, and such actions weaken the bonds of intimacy. In the extreme, men can exert undue power and commit "marital rape." However, since marital rape is considered less a sexual activity than one of violence and power, it is discussed in more detail in chapter 18.

INITIATING AND REFUSING SEX

Power is manifest in the ability to initiate sex or to refuse the partner's request. Traditionally, men have been the initiators of marital sexual activity. This style conforms to the traditional gender role pattern of male dominance and assertiveness. Women are aware of this cultural expectation and have generally acquiesced in it (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983: 209–212). They have not wished to challenge men's authority to initiate sexual activity for fear of undermining their husbands' self-esteem. However, recent changes in conceptions of gender roles have led to a reconsideration of this pattern. In fact, Blumstein and Schwartz's (1983) study demonstrates clearly that a sharing of power to initiate or refuse sex in marriage and cohabitation leads to a happier and more harmonious sex life for *both* partners. These egalitarian couples tend to have sex more frequently and report greater enjoyment than couples in which the husband has the sole power in this sphere.

In short, marital sexuality can be an arena in which power battles are carried out. Research suggests that this does not have to be the case. When sex becomes a truly shared experience the level of sexual satisfaction is enhanced for both partners.

EXTRAMARITAL SEX

Most Americans believe that extramarital sex is wrong in any circumstance. This form of behavior is more widely condemned than premarital sex, no matter which type of extramarital relationship is involved.

Forms of Extramarital Relationships

Reiss and Lee (1988) have identified four different types of extramarital relationships based on the degree of consensus between the marital partners and the main emphasis of the external relationship, love or pleasure.

CONSENSUAL AND LOVE-ORIENTED

This is the rarest form of extramarital relationship. It requires an agreement between the marital partners that one or both of them is permitted to have a love relationship outside of the marriage. Reiss and Lee (1988) estimate that between five and ten percent of married couples have probably discussed this issue and even agreed on some terms for it; however, they also "estimate that no more than one percent of married couples would accept such involvements." The infrequency of this form is due in part to the conception of marriage by Americans as an "exclusive" intimate relationship.

One form this type of relationship might take is "group marriage." However, this is not only rare in the United States but is equally uncommon around the world (Murdock, 1949). Constantine and Constantine (1973) studied thirty-four "multilateral (group) marriages." They found these structures very fragile; after one year, only 44 percent of these relationships still existed and by the end of three years only seventeen percent survived. Jealousy seems to play a major role in minimizing the viability of these extramarital relationships (Reiss, 1986). The problem of children and their family relationships also serve to reduce the frequency of this form.

CONSENSUAL AND PLEASURE-CENTERED

In this form there is also an agreement between the marriage partners to permit extramarital relationships if they are centered around pleasure and enjoyment rather than love. This change in focus makes the relationships somewhat less of a threat to the marriage. The practice does not, in principle, set up a competitive love relationship outside of marriage. Consequently, Reiss and Lee (1988) estimate about five to ten percent of American couples have been a party to this type of relationship.

In one model of this form the couples initially agree on its acceptability *as long as it doesn't involve love* and then generally do not discuss the matter further. In the "swinging" form, the agreement involves the joint participation of both partners. This form includes other married couples and usually takes place in the home of one of them. Interestingly, and contrary to what most people would expect, the relevant research studies (Bartell, 1971; Gilmartin, 1978) found that, though initially more hesitant, women seemed to enjoy the experience more than their husbands. Some reasons offered include the greater ease of multiple orgasms for women in a shorter time period, and the other women were often seen as not nearly as attractive as the men's fantasies had lead them to believe they would be.

Swinging was occasionally seen as a mechanism for creating friendships. The experience served to bond the participants to each other. Swingers were able to separate sex from love; they saw sex as capable of bringing pleasure whether or not it was tied to love. Thus they could enjoy sex without love and still maintain their marriage.

Bartell's Chicago sample of swingers tended to be generally conservative in their basic values. Gilmartin's California sample, on the other hand, tended to have more liberal social values and be more autonomous as couples; they had few if any close ties to family. In most other respects swingers in both samples were hardly distinguishable from nonswingers in the same area.

There was some evidence in the Bartell and Gilmartin studies of a double standard even among swingers. Attractive women were not only welcome as partners but made the men who brought them more desirable. Lesbian sex was encouraged for women to increase the sexual excitement of the viewing men, but gay sex was not permitted. Thus swinging was essentially a male-centered activity. No more than two percent of American couples are estimated to have engaged in swinging.

NONCONSENSUAL AND LOVE-FOCUSED

This is the secretive and deceptive form of extramarital affairs. Moreover, its love-focus makes it a threat to the existing marriage. This type of extramarital relationship violates two important norms of marriage. First, it requires deception and secrecy, undermining the openness expected and desired in marriage. Second, it subverts the expectation that marriage constitutes the partners' primary intimate relationship, one of sexual exclusivity. The denial of these two important marital norms make it likely that this form will be the least acceptable of the types of extramarital relationships described by Reiss and Lee (1988).

Some concern with the consensual and pleasure-focused extramarital relationship is that it will evolve into one based on love. It is this element that many see as more threatening to a marriage than the deception involved.

NONCONSENSUAL AND PLEASURE-CENTERED

The secret relationship that focused on pleasure rather than forming a rival intimate relationship is probably the most frequent form of extramarital affair. The emphasis on pleasure rather than love is not seen as a threat to a marriage, especially if the activity is not disclosed to the partner.

Though it is likely to be the most acceptable form, this style of extramarital sex is pervaded by a double standard. In general, it is more likely that a husband's involvement will be excused. Recently, however, the fear of AIDS has caused increasing concern and reduced the acceptability of this form of behavior, even for men. Husbands tend to see their own involvement in this type of relationship as less of a threat to marriage than a similar excursion on the part of their wives. This double standard is rooted in traditional conceptions of gender. From this perspective, men do not require love to have a sexual relationship, while women do.

The evidence about the effects of extramarital affairs on marriage is relatively meager. While some people attribute their divorce to the extramarital relationship of their spouse, they are less likely to credit the role of their own infidelity to the dissolution of their marriage.

Gender Differences

INCIDENCE

There is little solid evidence about the actual incidence of extramarital affairs, including differences between men and women. Incidence figures for married people who have had some form of extramarital relationship range from thirty percent to sixty percent depending on the social characteristics of the individuals (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983; Brecher, 1984).

There is general agreement among investigators that adultery is more often committed by husbands than wives. Kinsey, et al. (1948) found that more than half of all husbands reported engaging in some form of extramarital affair. These researchers also found that about a quarter of wives reported similar behavior (Kinsey, et al., 1953). While the prevalence of adultery decreases as men get older, it is highest for women in the middle years of their marriage, age thirty-six to forty.

The greater equality in gender roles that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s substantially reduced the difference in the incidence of extramarital affairs between younger husbands and wives. There is also some evidence to suggest that in the 1980s younger wives were more likely than their husbands to have committed adultery. However, these studies often involve a very select sample, for example, in the Peterson, et al. study (1983), readers of *Playboy* magazine. The accuracy of assuming the same findings for the general population is questionable.

Men engage in extramarital relationships earlier in marriage than do women. Husbands, for example, are more likely to have their affairs early in their marriage, typically within the first five years. Wives, on the other hand, tend to have their first extramarital liaison later in their marriage. Additionally, when wives have extramarital affairs these tend to be of longer duration than those of husbands.

CHARACTERISTICS

Extramarital affairs often occur between people who work together or who meet during the course of their jobs. They become acquainted and develop an erotic attraction to one another. Work liaisons provide the time and setting for affairs. Since a higher proportion of husbands than wives work, this basis of attachment is likely to differ by gender. As wives continue to enter the work force any earlier difference is likely to be reduced.

The age of the extramarital partner often differs for husbands and wives. Men usually choose partners their own age, while women's partners are either older or younger. For men the chief attraction is the physical pleasure of sex and the novelty of the experience. Since women are often looking for tenderness and warmth, age is not usually important.

Wives are much more likely to be emotionally involved than husbands in extramarital entanglements. Many husbands view their affairs as casual and isolated activities. Wives are likely to see an affair in a more serious light; they view it in the context of their marriage situation and life concerns, not as an isolated event. Especially among older women, adultery is likely to indicate marital discontent.

Some Reasons for Adultery

People engage in extramarital relationships for all sorts of reasons. Brecher (1984) has summarized several of the major reasons for engaging in extramarital affairs.

PLEASURE

People engage in an extramarital affair because they view sex as a pleasurable experience. The more sex, the greater is their enjoyment.

VARIATION IN SEXUAL EXPERIENCE

Variety in life is important to some people. This is no less true in the area of sexual encounters than in other facets of life. Diversity of partners may also mean variety in the experience of sex, and this can be exciting and stimulating.

SEARCH FOR EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION

People who feel that their emotional needs are not being adequately met in their marriage may seek other intimate relationships.

DESIRE FOR ROMANCE

Romance is an important element in American culture. Those who find little or no romance in their marriage may search for it through an extramarital relationship.

CURIOSITY

The allure of something different can lead some people into adultery. These individuals wish to find out what it feels like to share sexual intimacy with someone other than their spouse.

FRIENDSHIP

Sometimes sexual intimacy emerges from a friendship. Both friendship and marriage are forms of intimate relationships. A friendship may gradually expand and involve two people in an unplanned, erotic entanglement.

REBELLION

Just as people sometimes choose to marry someone of a different social group as a form of rebellion against social norms, they may also disagree with societal rules through extramarital relationships. They may see such liaisons as acts of independence.

RETALIATION

Sometimes adultery is an element of conflict, a "stand-off attack" against the spouse. It may be a way of inflicting pain in retaliation for some wrong the partner has committed.

SPOUSE ENCOURAGEMENT

Some marriages are basically satisfying but have one partner who is either unwilling or unable to share an interest in marital sexuality. In certain cases the other partner may be encouraged to seek sexual satisfaction outside of the marriage without being held accountable for doing so.

Characteristics of Those Having Extramarital Entanglements

A number of research studies have attempted to predict involvement in extramarital relationships. Reiss and Lee (1988: 271–275) have reviewed these studies and offer a summary of the likely characteristics of those engaging in adultery.

They find that people in happy marriages are less likely to engage in adultery. People who experienced sex before marriage have a higher rate of extramarital involvement than those who did not. Individuals who are well educated and have liberal attitudes about social and political issues, especially gender equality, are more likely to have been involved in an extramarital relationship. Men, especially those in traditional families, and younger people have higher rates of infidelity. Those whose activities outside of the home lead them into close and sustained contact with members of the opposite sex are provided with more opportunities for adultery and are overrepresented in the numbers of those establishing extramarital relationships.

Certain attitudes toward sexuality and intimate relationships also characterize people having extramarital affairs. These people are less likely to think of intimate relationships as exclusive and more likely to rank sexual pleasure high on a list of life's satisfactions.

Cultural Attitudes Toward Adultery

Few societies permit or encourage sex outside of marriage. In fact, Murdock (1949) found that an overwhelming eighty-one percent of the societies he studied had a taboo against adultery. This negative view of extramarital sex has been common in the United States. Despite the general liberalization of sexual attitudes and practices in recent years adultery is still frowned upon by most Americans.

Extramarital entanglements are seen as a realistic threat to marriage. All of the major religions consider adultery to be a violation of the sacred nature of marriage and hence a sin. As further evidence of society's attempt to reduce its frequency, adultery is forbidden by law in most states, even though the statute is rarely enforced today.

Interestingly, Americans are less likely to disapprove of an extramarital relationship if it does not involve love and emotional entanglements. Happily married people are more disapproving of adultery than those in unhappy marriages.

To conclude, societies generally discourage sexual relationships outside of marriage. However, they are more tolerant of those which do not threaten a successful marriage. The more religious people are, the less likely they are to tolerate any deviation from the taboo against adultery.

Sexuality is one of the central bonds in marriage. Its form and frequency differ over the course of marriage and in light of the characteristics of the partners. Despite views to the contrary, married men and women engage in masturbation as well as coitus. Husbands generally desire sex more frequently than wives, though recently this difference has begun to narrow. While both men and women have sexual fantasies, those of women tend to be more romantic. The different social classes experience marital sex differently; working-class couples are more restricted and traditional in their coital practices.

There are a number of common myths about marital sex. Most pervasive are those that link marital happiness and sexual satisfaction. Though marital sex and general marital satisfaction are seen as separate spheres by many, in actuality the relationship between them is interactive and different for husbands and wives. General satisfaction in marriage leads women to be more sexually responsive; the situation is often the reverse for men. Joint decisions about coital frequency and equality in initiating or refusing sex is associated with greater mutual sexual satisfaction.

Extramarital relationships differ in form. Four common forms have been identified—consensual and love-oriented (least common), consensual and pleasure-oriented, nonconsensual and love-oriented, and nonconsensual and pleasure-oriented (most common). Traditionally, husbands have engaged in adulterous relationships more frequently than wives. However, increasing gender equality has narrowed this gap. Husbands are more likely to have their first extramarital affair earlier in marriage than wives and with age peers. Wives' affairs last longer and are more likely to involve a partner who provides a measure of tenderness rather than just the physical attractiveness typically sought by adulterous men.

People engage in adultery for a variety of reasons. Some look for pleasure or variation in the sexual experience. Most societies discourage extramarital relationships. They are seen as a threat to marriage or as a sin against the sacred nature of the marital bond. Extramarital liaisons are especially condemned when they involve an affectional attachment.

13

Reproduction and Birth Control

This chapter will consider reproduction and birth control. Reproduction is more than a biological process. Pregnancy and childbirth are embedded in a sociological context. There are different forms of birth control that have both social and biological aspects to them. Some couples face involuntary infertility; there has been a recent improvement in methods to deal with this important and often demoralizing problem.

REPRODUCTION

Most married couples have children. Conception occurs through sexual intercourse and depends on the differences in reproductive anatomy and physiology of males and females. Each sex contributes in a complementary way to the reproductive process.

Female Reproductive Anatomy

EXTERIOR STRUCTURES

Female sexual anatomy includes an exterior portion composed of the *mons veneris* (an area of fatty tissue covered by short curly hair above the pubic bone), the *labia majora* (Latin for "main or greater lips" that consist of two folds of skin) and, within it, the *labia minora* (the "minor or lesser

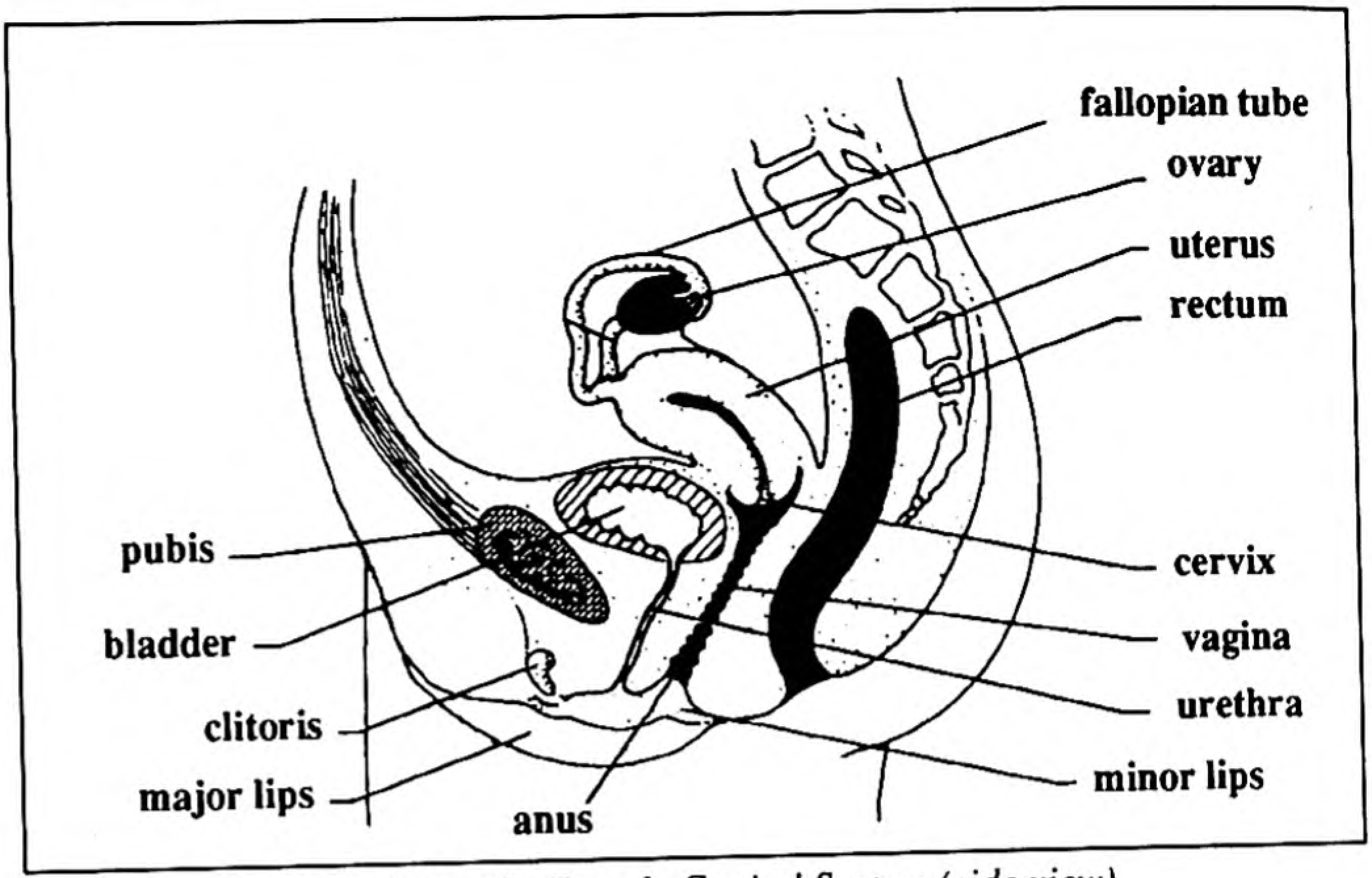

Fig. 13.1 The Female Genital System (side view)

lips"); together, these are referred to as the *vulva*. In addition, there is the *vestibule* (the entrance to the vagina), the *clitoris* (the sensitive erectile tissue and tip, called the *glans*), and the *hymen* (tissue that partially covers the opening to the exterior of the body and is generally ruptured at first intercourse, masturbation, or the use of a tampon). (See Fig. 13.1.)

INTERNAL STRUCTURES

The internal reproductive system is composed of the *vagina* (the birth canal, which opens to the outside), which is linked to the *uterus* (the "womb," which cradles the *fetus*, the unborn organism) by the *cervix* (the "neck"). The uterus is lined with soft tissue, called the *endometrium*, which adds layers each month to accommodate and nourish any fertilized *ovum* (egg). If the ovum is not fertilized, it and the endometrium pass out of the body as the monthly menstrual discharge. The ovum is produced in the *ovaries* (two pink, almond-shaped glands) through the process of *ovulation*, which results from stimulation by two hormones (estrogen and progesterone). Each month, an ovum travels down and lodges in the four-inch-long *fallopian tubes* (one connected to each ovary) until it is either fertilized by the male's sperm during intercourse or moves into the uterus.

Male Reproductive Anatomy

EXTERIOR STRUCTURES

The *penis* is an elongated structure of soft, sensitive erectile tissue that fills with blood and becomes enlarged when the man is sexually aroused. In its unaroused state it measures between 3.3 inches to 4.5 inches in length and 1.3 inches in diameter; aroused, it ranges in size from 4.7 inches to 9.2 inches

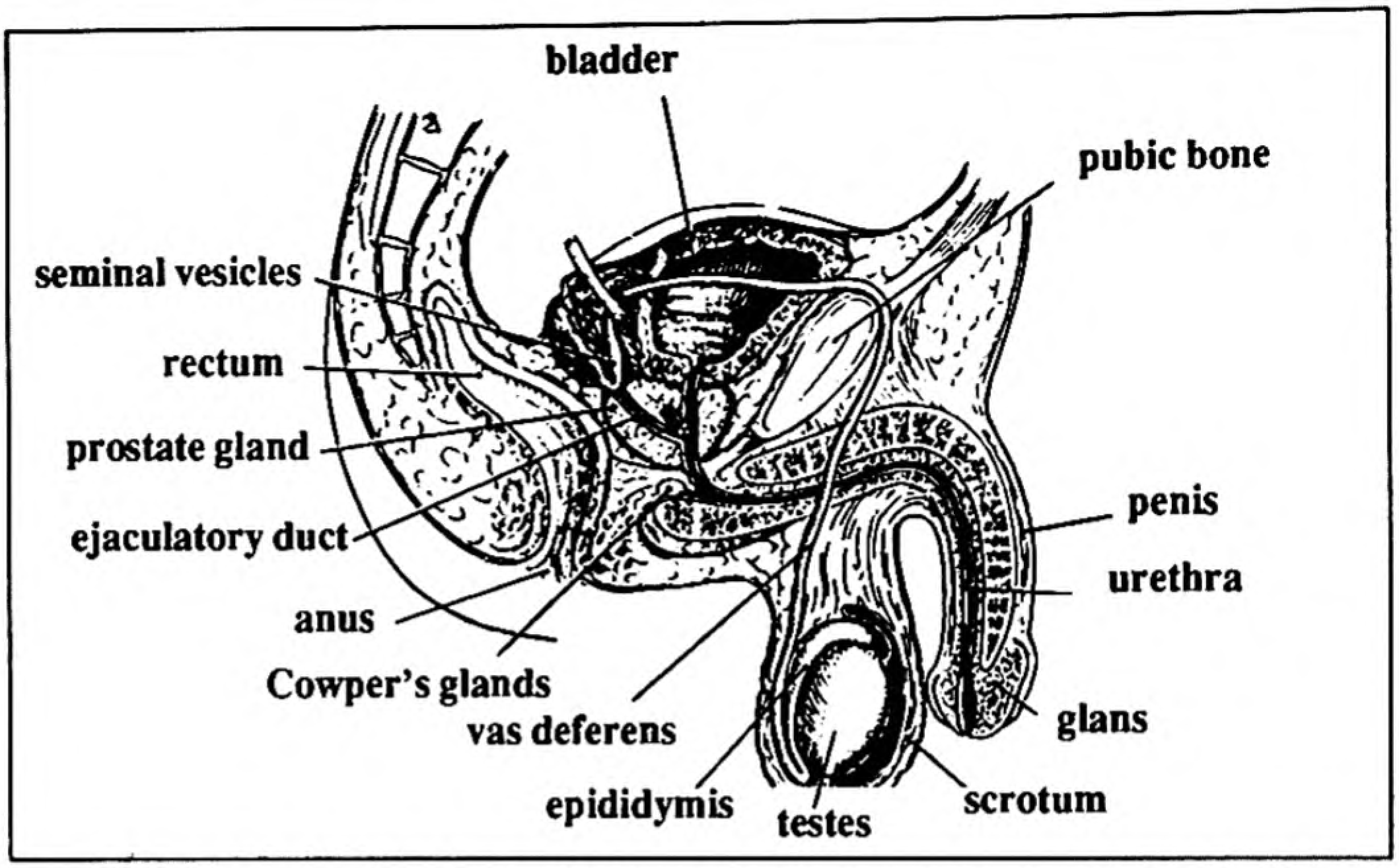

Fig. 13.2 The Male Genital System (side view)

in length and 1.5 inches in diameter. The most sensitive part of the penis is the *glans* at its tip, which is covered by the *foreskin prepuce*, often partially or completely removed during circumcision. At the base of the glans is the *corona*, which is especially sensitive to the touch. Within the penis is the *urethra*, the tube that carries both urine and seminal fluid containing the man's sperm (see Fig. 13.2).

The *scrotum* is a loose sac that hangs outside the body behind the penis and contains the testes. Its temperature is lower than the rest of the body to facilitate the production of sperm by the testes.

INTERNAL STRUCTURES

The *testes* are two bean-shaped organs within the scrotum that manufacture both sperm and the male hormone testosterone. *Sperm*, which carries the man's genetic inheritance and is equivalent to the woman's ovum, is manufactured in the *seminiferous tubules* of the testes and stored while maturing in the *epididymis*. Men generate billions of sperm each year. The *Cowper's glands* produce a fluid that helps lubricate the glans of the penis during sexual arousal, easing its entry into the vagina. The *seminal vesicles* and the *prostate gland* produce the milky fluid called *semen* to which sperm are added during their passage through the *vas deferens* from the testes to the urethra, for ejaculation during intercourse.

Conception and Fertilization

During intercourse the seminal fluid is ejected out of the penis and into the woman's vagina and from there to the fallopian tubes. The sperm can live in that environment for two to five days. If during that period a sperm meets and penetrates an ovum, *fertilization* occurs; the fertilized egg becomes a *zygote* when *conception* has taken place. The zygote travels to the uterus, where it implants itself in the thickened endometrium (*implantation*), which provides it with necessary nourishment until an umbilical cord develops, about five weeks after conception.

Sometimes the ovum becomes implanted and develops in tissue outside of the uterus, resulting in a dangerous *ectopic pregnancy*. The ovum may become embedded in the fallopian tubes instead of traveling on to the uterus or it may be forced back into the fallopian tubes by an irritated uterine lining. This condition, *tubal pregnancy*, is on the rise due to an increase in sexually transmitted diseases and is a leading cause of maternal deaths in the United States today.

PREGNANCY

Biological Aspects

Pregnancy lasts approximately nine months and progresses through a series of relatively discrete stages.

STAGES OF PREGNANCY

Germinal Period. During fertilization and implantation, the first few weeks of pregnancy, the woman often is unaware that she is pregnant. The first signs of pregnancy include the cessation of the menstrual period, nausea, fatigue, enlarged breasts, and an increase in the frequency of urination because the thickening uterus puts pressure on the bladder.

Embryonic Stage. From about the third to eighth week the organism's skeletal system, digestive system, and heart begin to form. A protective sac of salty, watery fluid, the *amniotic fluid*, also develops around the *embryo*, as the maturing organism is called. The amniotic fluid can be examined through *amniocentesis*, the removal of some of this fluid to determine the sex of the embryo and the presence of genetic abnormalities in the embryo. The *placenta* also forms to hold the embryo in place and to provide an avenue of nourishment from the mother.

Fetal Stage. This stage encompasses the rest of the time until the birth of the *fetus*. During this period the organs and other biological structures slowly develop. Facial features begin to take shape during the third month, and fingers and toes become well developed. The fourth month brings the beginning of the bony structures. Especially notable is *quickening*, the first fetal movements that are felt by woman in the fifth month. By the sixth month, the fetus weighs about twenty ounces and is about a foot in length. It can open and close its eyes and even suck its thumb; its basic anatomical structures and physiological processes are essentially complete by the end of this month. If the fetus is born at this time, it can survive, though this is not likely.

The final three months, or trimester, sees rapid growth and development. Survival after birth during this period is more likely, especially as time passes. The fetus gains about a half a pound a week during the last two months, increasing the woman's feelings of discomfort. Toward the end of this period the fetus usually changes its position in the womb so that the head is at the lower end of the uterus in preparation for birth.

Threats to the Intrauterine Environment

The developing embryo and fetus are susceptible to a number of problems. While there is no direct mixing of the maternal and fetal blood, substances in the woman's bloodstream pass through the placenta to the fetus and affect its development.

There are three major concerns about a woman's activities that may endanger the *prenatal (before birth) environment*: nutrition, smoking, and drugs.

NUTRITION

The fetus must be amply nourished by the mother. Poor maternal nutrition may not provide the fetus with the level of nourishment it needs to develop properly. Poor nutrition may also make a woman more prone to disease and poor health, which affects general fetal development.

SMOKING

Mothers who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have low birthweight babies. These infants are more likely to be born prematurely and to be prone to a variety of medical problems. Smoking during pregnancy also tends to increase the fetal heart rate and perhaps excessive levels of fetal activity.

DRUGS

A variety of drugs taken during pregnancy can seriously harm a developing fetus. Heavy consumption of alcohol at this time, for example, can result in *fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)*; FAS infants are born small, with mental deficiencies and severe physical deformities. Other drugs such as heroin and crack-cocaine can produce addicted babies. These newborns suffer withdrawal symptoms including convulsions, fever, and breathing difficulties.

The developing fetus may also be adversely affected by radiation caused by X rays, diseases of the mother or a variety of chemical agents. These "teratogens" cause a change in the normal genetic functioning and lead to abnormalities or malformations in the developing fetus.

Normal precautions during pregnancy allow a woman to avoid these threats to the normal development of the fetus.

Social Aspects

Pregnancy affects a woman in numerous physical ways. Her external body changes may affect her sense of identity, and the weight she gains is often a source of concern. Many women are convinced that they have become less attractive and seek assurances from their partner that they are still loved. Emotional support and consideration by the partner is important in alleviating these concerns.

Fatigue and a lack of physical stamina also affect the woman's sense of self. She often cannot do all the things she had been able to do prior to her pregnancy, and to some women this is a source of concern. Again, practical help and emotional support by the partner can reduce these difficulties.

The obvious physical changes in her body lead other people to treat a pregnant woman differently, to be solicitous of her needs. Strangers often act familiarly with her, asking about the desired sex of the child or when the baby is due while, for example, standing in line at the supermarket.

The prospective parents become increasing involved in the anticipation of the baby's arrival. They often spend a considerable amount of time thinking, talking, and planning for this event. It is a period of joy for most couples, but also one filled with tension and anxiety. The couple begins to engage in *anticipatory socialization*, considering what will be required of them as they change their status to that of parent.

There is no scientific or medical research to justify the folkloric wisdom that couples should avoid sex during pregnancy, especially the last two months. However, it is true that marital sex often decreases during pregnancy, especially at the very beginning and end of this period. The initial feelings of fatigue and nausea reduce a woman's desire for sex. The discomforts of the last stages of pregnancy similarly make marital sex a less desirable and comfortable activity.

CHILDBIRTH

Biological Aspects

STAGES OF CHILDBIRTH

The process of childbirth occurs through three stages—labor, delivery, and afterbirth.

Labor. Labor typically lasts between six and eighteen hours for a first child, less for subsequent children. The cervix dilates gradually from about an eighth of an inch to four inches to permit the passage of the baby. This period of dilation is generally slow, making this first stage the longest of the labor period. There are initially mild contractions of the uterine muscles at intervals of about fifteen to twenty minutes, increasing in frequency and intensity during this process. Typically some form of medication is used to ease the pain involved.

After sufficient dilation a bloody plug that has served to prevent infectious bacteria from entering the uterus is expelled. The amniotic membrane ruptures and the amniotic fluid flows out of the vagina (popularly referred to as "breaking the water"). These two events signal the imminence of birth.

Delivery. The delivery process typically takes anywhere from fifteen minutes to about one and one-half hours. The woman participates by tightening the muscles in her back, abdomen, and diaphragm. This aids the uterine muscles and often reduces the pain of delivery. Anesthetics to alleviate this pain are quite common.

In the typical delivery the baby's head emerges first from the vagina, a process called *crowning*. In some cases, however, the fetus has not turned to face the vaginal opening, and the physician must manipulate the fetus and turn it to face the proper direction. If not, the result is a *breech birth*, which is somewhat more difficult and dangerous. An *episiotomy*, a surgical incision to enlarge the vaginal opening, prevents painful tearing of vaginal tissue during childbirth.

Sometimes the baby is too large for the woman's pelvic arch or the physical condition of the baby or the woman makes it necessary to perform a *Cesarean section* (C-section). In this operation, named after Julius Caesar who was reportedly born in this manner, an incision is made in the woman's abdomen and uterine wall and the fetus extracted. The number of Cesarean sections has increased from six percent of all deliveries in 1970 to twenty-four percent in 1987 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990: 66). C-sections carry the hazards of any surgical procedure and the infant has a greater risk of problems due to the use of anesthesia; repeat Cesarean sections carry greater risk of mortality for the mother. However, women thirty-five years and older are considered more likely candidates for this type of delivery since their age increases the risk of birth complications.

Afterbirth. The third stage of birth occurs after delivery. Within a half-hour, the *afterbirth* is expelled from the woman's body. This consists of the *placenta* (through which the fetus received its nourishment and eliminated its wastes while in the uterus), the amniotic sac, and the remainder of the umbilical cord.

Social Aspects

Though childbirth is a natural biological process, its actual practice is governed by cultural views and social norms. These focus on where the childbirth takes place, who assumes responsibilities for the delivery, and what specific procedures are used in the delivery process.

WHERE CHILDBIRTH OCCURS

In the industrial world, most births occur in hospitals (about ninety-nine percent in the United States), though this is a relatively recent practice. It has grown in popularity from the second third of this century. Before that, births at home were quite common. However, advances in medical practice and technology led to the view that home deliveries were not as safe as those in a hospital staffed with appropriate medical personnel and containing up-to-date medical technology.

Two contemporary developments—*maternal birthing centers* and *rooming-in* either within a hospital or in a stand-alone facility—have become increasingly popular for many families. These arrangements are closer to the earlier form of home births with the addition of a staff of attending medical personnel and appropriate medical technology. They provide a more homelike environment and are more flexible with respect to the presence of family and friends. They respond to the criticism that the typical hospital delivery is arranged for the convenience of the physician and not the pregnant woman and her partner.

WHO DELIVERS THE BABY

In the United States it is assumed that a physician will deliver the baby. However, that has not been the case in other societies or even in this society at an earlier time (Whiting, 1974). Historically, births were the province of a pregnant woman's mother, mother-in-law, and other older and experienced mothers; physicians were only involved if there were complications. It was not uncommon for a pregnant woman to trust her birth to a *midwife*, a person trained in the art of assisting women who are giving birth. In the past, midwives were exclusively women. Now there are male midwives as well; academic programs and licensing in "nurse-midwifery" now exist.

Historically, it was rare for men to play any role in the birth process. Typically they paced nervously in the waiting room until the baby was born. Today men play an increasingly active role in the birth process; this is especially true in the various forms of "natural childbirth" discussed below.

SPECIFIC PRACTICES OF CHILDBIRTH

In addition to the common techniques of childbirth already described, three additional forms have become popular.

Natural Childbirth. This approach assumes that childbirth is a natural process that need not be feared. A growing number of physicians believe that fear causes some of the tenseness and pain of delivery. Good prenatal care and exercise can help reduce the need for forceps, anesthesia or labor-inducing drugs, all of which are risky for the infant. Natural childbirth also challenges the implicit assumption that physicians know best and that everything should be left in their hands. It gives voice to the view that the woman is the best judge of what is happening in her body, and the father should be more than just an innocent bystander in the delivery process.

Lamaze Method. This technique focuses on joint preparation for childbirth by both partners. During Lamaze classes the woman learns breathing and muscular exercises to allow her to relax during delivery and to assist in the birth. Men are taught how to assist their partners by acting as a coach during the months of practice and the actual delivery. Preparation and joint responsibility are the hallmark of this approach. Most parents who use the Lamaze method find satisfaction in it and plan to use it for subsequent births.

Leboyer Method. This technique focuses on a "gentle" birth by attempting to minimize the trauma involved. It works to ease the baby's shock in the transition from the womb to the external world. In most delivery rooms there is considerable light and noise. In the Leboyer method low levels of indirect lighting are used and there is minimal talking or other noise during delivery. Immediately after birth the newly delivered baby is placed on the woman's abdomen with the umbilical cord still attached giving the infant a feeling of comfort and softness. The baby is then gently massaged and bathed in warm water. Though this method leads to a shorter first stage of labor than conventional births, no significant increase has been found in the mother's satisfaction nor is there any reduction in the amount of crying by the infant following birth.

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

It has been estimated that between one-half and three-fourths of new mothers suffer a moderate degree of depression within a few days of giving birth. This *postpartum depression* usually is manifest in the mother's irritability, insomnia, frequent crying, and feelings of anxiety. These symptoms are in part a consequence of the stress that new mothers face because of the general lack of cultural preparation for parenthood in American society. Feeding difficulties and the inability to soothe a cranky baby are common causes of stress to new mothers.

In about ten to twenty percent of mothers, postpartum depression occurs about three months later. This form can be severe and lead to serious difficulties. In these cases treatment may involve the use of drugs to reduce depression, help the mother to sleep better, and control agitation and anxiety.

BIRTH CONTROL

Methods of Contraception

The most direct method of birth control is to insure that conception is avoided. A variety of techniques are directed to that end. All contraceptive practices seek to keep the man's sperm from uniting with the woman's ovum.

ABSTINENCE

Refraining from sexual intercourse is the most successful form of contraceptive practice. It is 100 percent effective. Few if any couples are likely to use this technique to avoid having children. However, there is a form of abstinence practiced by couples who are committed Roman Catholics.

Rhythm Method (Selective Abstinence). This is the only method approved by the Roman Catholic church for preventing conception. It involves abstaining from sexual intercourse during ovulation, a period consisting of the middle of the monthly cycle and the two days before and after this time. A woman's *basal body temperature* drops between twelve to twenty-four hours before ovulation and then rises for at least three days. A sensitive basal thermometer can be used to identify a "safe" period when conception is not likely to occur. Preprinted charts of such safe periods are available for women whose menstrual cycles are regular and who have determined their basal temperature fluctuations for about eight months.

STERILIZATION

This is the most frequently used form of contraceptive practice in the United States. It is the one form that is potentially irreversible.

Men. In men, it takes the form of a *vasectomy* in which the vas deferens is cut and cauterized so that sperm cannot mix with other elements of the semen. This surgical procedure is usually performed in a physician's office and is quite effective; cauterization results in a failure rate of only about two-tenths of one percent, and cutting between one and six percent. Normal sexual relations can resume within a few days, though other methods of contraception are necessary for about two months after the surgery, during which time previously manufactured sperm still are present in the seminal fluid. Vasectomies have no physiological effect on sexual interest or performance; in fact most men report that a vasectomy enhances their marriages by reducing concern over unwanted pregnancy.

Women. In women, sterilization is called either *tubal ligation* or *laparoscopy*, and involves a small incision in the abdomen to cauterize the fallopian tubes. This prevents the ovum from descending from the ovaries and being fertilized. As with vasectomies, tubal ligations have no physiological effects on sexual desire or activities; again, some women report that the procedure improves their marriages.

WITHDRAWAL

The most widely used method of contraception across the world involves withdrawing the penis from the vagina before ejaculation (*coitus interruptus*). It is an unreliable technique with a failure rate of about eighteen percent. It requires considerable self-control to be effective, and it forces the couple to concentrate on the withdrawal rather than on the sexual pleasure involved.

DOUCHING

This technique is the least effective contraceptive method. It assumes that *douching* the vagina immediately after intercourse with water or a special solution will keep the sperm from entering the uterus and uniting with an ovum. The sperm, however, are often out of the reach of the douching solution before the woman can use the technique. In fact, douching may even propel some sperm further toward the cervix. This method has a failure rate of about 40 percent.

Several methods use chemical means to avoid conception. These are the birth control pill, two new techniques (RU-486 and subdermal implants), and spermicides.

BIRTH CONTROL PILL

The second most commonly used contraceptive method today in the United States is the pill; it is also the most effective. The *combination pill* contains a synthetic form of estrogen and progestin (a synthetic chemical similar to progesterone). There are two new versions of the pill, one that uses a lower dosage of the synthetic hormones, and a multiphasic version that provides a varying dosage of the hormones over the menstrual cycle. The pill is available through prescription. The pill disturbs the normal hormonal cycle by signaling the pituitary gland not to produce a normal amount of the follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and the luteinizing hormone (LH), which are necessary to bring on ovulation. It both impedes the development of the uterine lining to prevent its receiving a fertilized ovum, and also thickens the cervical mucous making it more difficult for sperm to enter the uterus.

The pill has the added advantage of shortening the menstrual cycle of most women as well as making it more predictable. It also reduces the risk for ovarian and uterine cancer, and is associated with a lower incidence of benign breast disease and ovarian cysts. On the other hand, the pill does cause weight gain and nausea in some women, and is not recommended for women beyond the age of thirty-five who smoke. Neither is it advised for women who have high risk factors for cardiovascular disease (obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and high levels of cholesterol). Finally, there is conflicting scientific evidence of a possible link between the use of the pill and breast cancer.

RU-486 ("MORNING AFTER" PILL)

This oral contraceptive is designed to be taken after a woman has missed her first period, which indicates a possible pregnancy. RU-486 works by inducing a miscarriage during the early stages of pregnancy and is thus technically not a contraceptive. By itself, it is about seventy percent effective when taken within forty to fifty days of conception; together with another drug, prostaglandin, it has a ninety percent success rate. It requires a prescription and medical supervision. Although it is being used in Europe, currently its distribution in the United States has been blocked by those who consider this technique a form of abortion and oppose it as such.

SUBDERMAL IMPLANTS (NORPLANT)

In a physician's office six rod-like capsules containing progestin are implanted under the skin in a woman's arm. Though they can be felt the capsules are typically not visible. They are usually effective for about five years and offer contraceptive protection comparable to the hormone pill; they are a convenient form of contraception. There has been some concern recently about this method; poor women may be susceptible to pressure both from welfare agencies or from the courts to use this system to avoid having additional children.

SPERMICIDAL AGENTS

Spermicides are chemical agents that immobilize and destroy sperm. They are available as foams, creams, jellies, sprays, and suppositories without prescription, and must be used between one-half hour and one hour before intercourse. They have few side effects, other than messiness, and are about 80 percent effective.

The following conceptive techniques rely on some form of physical barrier to prevent the union of sperm and ovum.

CONDOM

A condom is a thin piece of rubber or synthetic material that is placed over the penis prior to intercourse, with a rubber ring at the open end to keep it from coming off. About one-half inch of space is left at the end of the condom when it is unrolled and put on the penis to catch and prevent the semen from entering the woman's vagina. Some condoms are lubricated to make vaginal penetration easier; some are also coated with a spermicide to further reduce the risk of pregnancy. Available at drug stores and recently in vending machines, condoms with a spermicide are nearly 100 percent effective when used properly. In actual practice they are about 90 percent effective because of occasional defects and the dripping of semen while removing the condom. Condoms are the only effective barrier to the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases and have been recommended to reduce the danger of contracting AIDS. Consequently, condoms have become the third most frequently used form of contraception. They are currently the only contraceptive method available to men, though there are some experimental techniques on the horizon including a condom for women.

DIAPHRAGM

This device is a soft, dome-like rubber cup with a flexible rim that is stretched over a collapsible spring rim to cover the cervix during intercourse. It is often covered with a spermicidal jelly or cream to reduce further the risk of pregnancy. Diaphragms vary in size and are available by prescription. The device must be inserted one or two hours before intercourse and remain in place for at least six hours afterwards. Its effectiveness is quite high, with a failure rate of about five percent when used properly. In actual practice it has a failure rate of about eighteen percent because it is not used with every act of intercourse.

CERVICAL CAP

The cervical cap is a thimble-like piece of rubber or plastic that is placed directly over the cervix prior to intercourse. It should be used in conjunction with a chemical spermicide. Like the diaphragm, the cap requires a prescription by a physician. In contrast to the diaphragm, it can be left in place for up to forty-eight hours after initial insertion and thus is less likely to limit the spontaneity of an act of sexual intercourse. The cap is more popular and more widely available in Europe than in the United States, where it was approved for marketing only in 1988. The effectiveness of the cervical cap is about equal to that of the diaphragm; however, there is some concern that it may accelerate certain precancerous abnormalities of the cervix, though this has not yet been clearly established.

SPONGE

This pillow-shaped device is made of polyurethane and is saturated with a chemical spermicide; it has a loop made of fabric attached to make it easy to remove. It does not require a prescription. Like the diaphragm and the cervical cap, it is inserted into the vagina before intercourse and can provide up to twenty-four hours of protection against conception, though it must be left in place for at least six hours after intercourse. Because of the danger of toxic shock syndrome, it is recommended that the sponge not remain in the vagina for more than twenty-four hours. The sponge is about as effective as the diaphragm for women who have never been pregnant; its failure rate is twice as high for women who have.

INTRAUTERINE DEVICE (IUD)

The IUD is a small plastic device, sometimes coated with copper wire to increase its effectiveness, that must be inserted into the uterus by a gynecologist. It comes in several sizes and shapes and has one or two threads attached to facilitate its removal. The IUD can remain in place for several years, thus severing the connection between contraception and intercourse. It apparently works by irritating the uterine wall and not allowing the implantation of a fertilized ovum. Technically, then, the IUD is a birth-control rather than a contraceptive device; it prevents birth rather than conception. However, it has traditionally been considered a contraceptive.

Some women cannot tolerate the IUD and it is expelled from their body; others experience excessive menstrual bleeding, cramps, and lower back pain. One brand, the Dalkon Shield, has caused pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), sterility, and death, and was taken off the market in 1974. By 1986 all the major companies manufacturing IUDs took them off the United States market because of the costs of lawsuits and product liability insurance. Two new IUDs are now available in the United States. One, Progestasert-T, releases progestin and needs to be replaced annually, while the other, Copper-T 380A, can remain in place for four years.

The general failure rate of IUDs for women who can tolerate them has been quite low, about three to six percent.

EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

Several contraceptive techniques are in various stages of development. These include an oral contraceptive for men, gossypol, which is a cotton-based extract that inhibits sperm production and motility. It also results in infertility and a loss of potassium after discontinuing use. There are also contraceptive nasal sprays and vaccines under development for both men and women; however, they have some serious side effects and need considerable testing to establish both their safety and effectiveness.

Abortion

The issue of abortion is probably the most controversial and emotionally charged legal and moral issue facing American society today. Technically, *abortion* is the expulsion or removal of an embryo or fetus from the uterus before the normal time for birth. There are *spontaneous abortions* or *miscarriages* in which the embryo separates from the uterine wall and is expelled before it can survive on its own. About ten percent of all pregnancies are thought to end in a miscarriage, usually during the first few months. The present controversy involves *induced abortions*, which are actions taken to remove the developing organism from the uterus before it is viable. About one-and-a-half million legal abortions are performed annually in the United States, about two-thirds on women between the ages of fifteen to twenty-four. These numbers are due in part to the greater fertility of young women.

POLITICAL AND MORAL CONTROVERSY

The long-standing practice of induced abortions became illegal in the United States in the nineteenth century; however, several states continued to permit the procedure. The issue was decided nationally by the United

States Supreme Court on January 22, 1973 in *Roe* v. *Wade*. That ruling permitted abortions during the first trimester of pregnancy on the basis of a decision by a woman and her physician, a right states could not take away. During the second trimester, the states were free to impose reasonable standards and regulations for abortions to protect the health of the woman, but they could not prohibit abortion. States were given the right to prohibit abortion during the final trimester, when the fetus was deemed to be viable. Recent judicial decisions at the federal and state level have tended to constrict the original freedom of choice granted women by *Roe* v. *Wade*.

***Roe* v. *Wade*.** The legal and moral controversy over abortion continues. There is considerable evidence that a majority of Americans support the logic of the original *Roe* v. *Wade* decision. However, the political strength of the pro-life forces and the increasingly conservative composition of the federal judiciary, including the United States Supreme Court throughout the 1980s, suggested, at least until the election of President Clinton in 1993, further restrictions on a woman's right to abortion, including the possibility of an outright repeal of *Roe* v. *Wade*. The heart of this controversy is a difference in values, relevant scientific evidence, privacy rights, and the role of sexuality in intimate relationships that makes the issue unlikely to be resolved through compromise.

ABORTION METHODS

There are various methods used to perform an abortion.

Vacuum Curettage (or Vacuum Aspiration). This is the easiest and most frequently used method of induced abortion; it is performed during the first trimester. During the procedure a hollow tube is inserted into the uterus and a suction pump attached to the tube gently draws out the amniotic sac and part of the uterine lining. This is a simple office procedure that is typically done under local anesthetic and takes only minutes; only a few hours of recovery are required.

Dilation and Curettage (D and C). This is another first trimester method. This technique involves dilating the cervix and scraping the walls of the uterus. Though the procedure takes only a few minutes, it can cause hemorrhaging and has largely been abandoned in favor of vacuum curettage.

Dilation and Evacuation (D and E). This is a relatively new method of performing abortions and is the most common technique used during the second trimester. The cervix is dilated under either local or general anesthetic and the amniotic sac and some of the uterine lining is removed by a combination of suction and scraping.

Amniotic Injection. The injection of either saline solution or prostaglandins into the amniotic fluid is used to end pregnancies from the late second trimester on. The injected fluids cause contractions that expel the fetus within twenty-four hours. This procedure often requires a hospital stay.

There is a greater risk to the woman with this technique; however, since late abortions are relatively rare, it is not used very often.

Hysterotomy. This is a major surgical procedure that is used for late abortions. It is essentially the same as a Cesarean section birth, with an incision in the abdomen to remove the fetus. All future births are likely to require a Cesarean section. This technique typically requires a hospital stay of four to seven days, and a recovery period lasting several weeks.

EFFECTS OF ABORTION

Physiologically there are several possible effects following an abortion. Some women experience hemorrhaging, though this is often easily controlled. Perforation or laceration of the cervix or uterus may occur, though this is rare if the abortion is performed by a skilled physician. Abortion has apparently no effect on future pregnancies. And except for abortions performed after the fifteenth week, the chance of dying from a legal abortion is considerably less than from carrying a pregnancy to its conclusion.

There is conflicting evidence on the psychological effects of abortion. The difference may be accounted for by the degree of support that a woman receives from those who are important to her, as well as her religious background.

Involuntary Infertility

For many couples the issue is not birth control but how to have the children they want. *Involuntary infertility* is generally defined as the inability to conceive a child after a year of unprotected sexual intercourse, or to carry a pregnancy long enough to permit a live birth. About fifteen percent of all married couples are currently infertile. This percentage has apparently increased substantially over the past quarter century due to an increase in sexually transmitted diseases and the number of women who postpone having children for career or educational reasons.

Infertility results from problems with some aspect of the man's or the woman's reproductive system, though in about twenty percent of the cases the cause is either shared or unknown.

MEN'S INFERTILITY

In men, infertility arises primarily from a low sperm count, though poor sperm quality or inadequate motility on the part of the sperm can also produce infertility. Low sperm count and poor motility are often due to a *varicocele* (a damaged or enlarged vein) in the testes or vas deferens that affects sperm production and quality. Infections, hormone disorders, excessive exposure to radiation, and environmental pollutants are other causes. Heavy use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs may also contribute to lower sperm counts and poor motility.

WOMEN'S INFERTILITY

Infertility in women is usually a consequence of damaged or blocked fallopian tubes; irregular ovulation or the presence of a lethal factor in the cervical mucous are other reasons. Scar tissue formed as a result of certain sexually transmitted diseases is the most common reason for problems with the fallopian tubes. Ovulation problems may result from anemia, malnutrition, vitamin deficiency, psychological stress or hormonal imbalances.

TREATMENT OF INFERTILITY

A variety of methods are used to treat infertility.

Surgical Treatment. Surgery for the man's varicocele will improve the semen quality by about sixty to seventy percent. This often results in a fifty percent pregnancy success rate. Similarly, some thirty to fifty percent of women with fallopian tube blockage can be helped by microsurgical techniques that remove damaging scar tissue.

Drug Therapy. Used to deal with hormonal problems, it may alleviate some of these barriers to fertility in women.

Artificial Insemination (AI). This is a technique in which a physician injects sperm into the uterus of a woman who is fertile at the time of ovulation. In some cases the sperm comes from the husband after it has been treated to increase its number and quality. More often it comes from a donor who is screened for sexually transmitted diseases, genetic diseases, physical status, and health history. The Roman Catholic church opposes all forms of AI because of its separation of intercourse from procreation and because it tampers with a natural process.

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF). This is popularly referred to as a "test-tube pregnancy" and is one of the most common ways of dealing with infertility. The physician makes an incision in the woman's abdomen and removes an ovum from the ovaries. This ovum is then fertilized in a dish with the partner's sperm. The resulting fertilized egg is then put into another dish which contains necessary nourishment for about five days, after which it is replaced into the woman's uterus which has undergone hormone treatment in the meantime. IVF is tried with several ova at the same time in hopes that one of them will develop appropriately. The success rate is about fifteen to twenty percent, and the total cost may reach $25,000 to $40,000.

Surrogate Motherhood. This is considered by most couples to be an extreme measure, one that is tried only if other techniques have proven inappropriate or ineffective. In surrogate motherhood a volunteer woman is artificially inseminated with the sperm from the husband of a woman who is either infertile or risks transmitting a genetic defect to her offspring.

Surrogate motherhood is expensive (about $25,000) and is legally complicated. The law is unclear about what happens if the surrogate mother decides to break the contract and refuses to give up the child. Also, some states outlaw or severely restrict this practice. Only 200 babies are estimated to have been born through this technique.

Embryo Transfer. This procedure is similar to surrogate motherhood, but more experimental. A volunteer woman is artificially inseminated with sperm from the husband of a woman who has difficulty producing usable ova. Several days after conception takes place the fertilized ovum is removed from the volunteer and placed in the wife's uterus. The procedure is timed to coincide with the appropriate period in the wife's menstrual cycle, so that her uterus is prepared to accept and nurture the fertilized egg.

Adoption. Though it is estimated that over two percent of the American population has been adopted, there is currently a shortage of available healthy babies; this is especially true for couples wanting a white baby. There are about 60,000 adoptions annually, and the cost ranges from $6,000 to $20,000 or more depending on the circumstances.

Pregnancy depends on the complementary reproductive anatomy and physiology of men and women. The man's sperm fertilizes the woman's ovum as a consequence of sexual intercourse during her fertile period. The fertilized ovum implants itself in the uterine wall, where it is nourished through the placenta and develops during the normal course of nine months through a series of relatively discrete stages. During this time the fetus is at risk from the mother's poor nutrition, smoking, drug and alcohol use, and a variety of environmental factors.

Pregnancy brings with it both physical and social changes to a woman. These require adjustments that are facilitated by the support of the husband and others. The impending role change to parent often influences how others treat the couple, especially the expectant mother, and how they behave toward one another.

Childbirth occurs in three stages; labor, delivery, and afterbirth. These usually take place over a period of six to twenty hours. Practically all births in the United States today take place in a hospital with the assistance of a physician. Recently, though, there have been a number of changes in the methods of delivering babies that focus more on the needs of the parents. Some mothers experience a postpartum depression after birth, but this is normally mild in form and temporary.

Births can be avoided in a number of ways. One way is to prevent conception. Another method involves postconception abortion, for which there are several methods. Abortion is entwined in legal, moral, and political controversy that is not easily resolved.

Some couples are unable to have a child. Various surgical, chemical, and recent high-technology treatments are available to help some infertile couples become parents. Adoption is also a possibility for these couples.

14

Parenthood and Parenting

Becoming a parent is a major change in a person's social status. This chapter explores the variety of social and personal considerations that go into that critical decision. The consequences of having children are also examined. Families raise their children differently. Parental styles and variation among sociological groups in childrearing practices are considered along with parenting differences across the family's life cycle.

FERTILITY IN THE UNITED STATES

The availability of birth control methods detailed in the previous chapter and changing social and demographic factors have significantly influenced American fertility patterns. With the exception of the "baby boom" after World War II, the *birth rate* (the actual number of children born per year to 1,000 women of childbearing age, fifteen to forty-four) has decreased steadily since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Despite the general decrease in *fertility* (the total number of babies born to women during their reproductive years), there were more children born in the 1980s than previously. This increase was a consequence of the "baby boom echo," the large numbers of women who are the children of the original baby boom parents and who are now becoming parents themselves. However, overall family size and total number of births are likely to continue to decline.

Declining fertility is due to a number of factors. The increased availability of birth control measures has allowed greater choice in whether to have children and how many. Rising economic status and the change in gender role conceptions has led to values and lifestyles resulting in a decrease in fertility. However, parenthood is still a preferred status.

PARENTHOOD: A NEW STATUS

Children not only transform a couple into a family, they also add a significant new social status to the partners; adults become parents as well as spouses. This new status has long been honored in American society. However, the decision about whether to become a parent, when, and how frequently has become an increasingly complex one. The transition to this new status is not without problems, and the meaning of parenthood has been changing in recent times.

The Decision About Parenthood

The decision about whether or not to have children is a relatively modern dilemma. In traditional societies the general view that children were a natural part of marriage combined with the lack of effective birth control made choice unnecessary for most couples. Today, however, the decision is influenced by a number of complex factors.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION TO BE A PARENT

Social Expectations. Despite a decline in the degree of social pressure for married couples to have children, many people still believe that children are an intrinsic part of marriage; potential grandparents support this expectation. The personal tax exemption allowed for children and the allowance for deduction of child care expenses suggest a *pronatalist bias* in American society.

However, several sociologists claim there is an equally powerful *antinatalist bias* built into the American social structure. Many business firms stress job necessities over family obligations, especially parental responsibilities; few have a parental leave policy that would allow for a balancing of family and career needs. When companies do allow such leaves they are often *unpaid*, in contrast to firms in other countries. In fact, some industrialized countries, such as Sweden, have national policies that grant *paid* parental leaves to deal with family matters. National budgetary priorities, some scholars argue, have long resulted in less support for the needs of families and children than for defense and economic development.

Personal Considerations. Most parents indicate that they chose to have children for a number of personal reasons. They believe it is important to bring children into the world, especially with someone they love, and they believe that they are well-equipped to do so. It adds to their sense of purpose and meaning in life. They also see children as a source of love and affection throughout their lives; the raising of children is seen as a gratifying experience. These latter reasons fulfill deep personal needs for many people.

Some choose to have children as a sign of maturity. To be a parent is to be accepted by society as an adult. It is one of the reasons for teenage pregnancies. The importance of carrying on a family name through having a child is also given as a reason. Some people's religious values commit them to parenthood in marriage. Roman Catholics, for example, see having children as a sacred obligation of marriage.

Men and women give different reasons for having children, as do people of different social backgrounds. However, studies show that there is considerable similarity between them on the personal factors that influence this decision (e.g., Burnell and Norfleet, 1986).

Economic Factors. When the United States was predominantly an agricultural society, children were an economic value to parents. They could contribute necessary labor to the family farm and help provide for parents when they could no longer work. Today, children are more likely to be an economic liability to families. It has been estimated that the direct cost of raising a child, including a four-year education at a state university, exceeds a quarter of a million dollars. Indirectly, there are additional *opportunity costs* when a parent (usually the mother) gives up a chance for paid employment or for career advancement to raise the child, or by not being able to invest the funds spent on children to bring a financial return.

While most couples do not explicitly calculate the exact financial costs in deciding whether or not to become parents, some do. More importantly, these concerns play an increasing role in the decision about how many children a couple should have. Though it is evident that children decrease a family's standard of living, most parents do not base the decision to have children primarily on economic grounds.

Effect on the Marital Relationship. Children transform the marital relationship. Becoming parents redirects the couple's former exclusive concern for each other to someone else. While this new object of attention and effort is their joint product and is also the center of love and pleasure for many parents, a child does materially affect the earlier marital relationship. The couple often has less exclusive time for each other, and the routine tasks of parenthood are time-consuming and tiring. This factor leads some couples to postpone or forgo parenthood.

It is not surprising that a number of research studies indicates that couples report their periods of greatest marital happiness were before the arrival of their first child and after the last child had left home. However, it needs to be noted that during the first period one or both partners is often working extremely hard to establish themselves in their career. Consequently, the reported drop in happiness at this time cannot be attributed solely to the problems of parenthood.

Contemporary Options

The decision about whether to become a parent is an increasingly complex and difficult one. The greater number of working women and the greater availability of effective techniques of birth control have led to three less traditional options for the contemporary couple.

CHILD-FREE MARRIAGE

The number of marriages without children has been growing recently. The decision not to have children has often been based on several grounds. Some of these couples see greater opportunity for self-fulfillment and a more satisfactory marital relationship without children. They cite the importance of career opportunities for wives and the economic disadvantages of children. Some are concerned about population growth and the environment, and some simply do not like children. The reasons for remaining child-free vary from couple to couple.

Despite popular opinion to the contrary, couples who decide not to have children do not appear to be any more selfish than parents. These couples, however, tend to place greater emphasis on personal goals and the wives have very strong career interests. They prefer to spend most of their time with each other rather than with people outside of the marriage relationship.

The important issue in remaining child-free is that it is a joint decision of husband and wife. Given this factor, there seems to be no difference in marital happiness between couples with and without children, though the latter group reports greater levels of marital adjustment and more social interaction between spouses.

POSTPONING PARENTHOOD

More and more women are delaying parenthood. In the past decade, for example, the number of women who had their first child after age thirty increased while the number younger than thirty decreased (see Table 14.1). These women tend to be highly educated and are pursuing career interests. Despite an earlier concern about health risks to both mother and child of delayed pregnancies, more recent evidence indicates little additional danger until the woman is in her forties. In fact, older mothers are less likely to have low birthweight babies. In large part the reduced danger of delayed pregnancies is due to improvements in medical care for late pregnancies and the general good health and prenatal preparation of these women.

Postponing parenthood requires a trade-off of time for a couple. They have more exclusive time together at the beginning of their marriage, but less time after their children are grown. Also, older mothers are generally more likely to have a shorter interval between subsequent births. Though most parents consider a two-year interval between children desirable, most child-care experts suggest that three years would be more appropriate. This period gives the child time to establish a degree of identity and inde-

	First Births per 1,000 Women		First Births as Percent of Total Births	
Age of Mother	1980	1988	1980	1988
18–29 years	48.6	42.0	46.9	42.3
30–44 years	6.3	9.6	17.8	21.3

Table 14.1 Number of First Births by Age of Mother, 1980 and 1988 (Adapted from Statistical Abstracts [1990], Table 92)

pendence. It also allows the parent be free of some of the more difficult aspects of childrearing with one child before taking them on for another.

Delaying the birth of the first child affords the parents more time to accumulate the necessary finances to support a family and to advance in their careers. However, depending on the particular career, delayed parenthood may mean having the first child just as a parent's career is at a critical point. Postponing parenthood may also provide time for the couple to make the necessary marital adjustments and therefore create a more emotionally stable environment for the child.

ONE-CHILD FAMILIES

As educational levels of parents have increased along with wives' employment and the cost of living, the number of children per family has decreased. At present about one-quarter of all families have one child. Restricting the family to one child is an explicit policy of the People's Republic of China, which wishes to slow its exploding population growth. However, the increase in this family form in the United States is a result of the change in women's gender roles, conceptions of marriage, and high cost of living.

Parents in these families report they have more free time and are in a better financial position to give more advantages to their children. They enjoy being parents without being excessively burdened by the demands made by more children. These families are able to do more things together than larger families. On the other hand, only children lack the experience, support, and interaction with siblings that are often useful in growing up. They are also subject to more parental supervision, concern, and pressure.

Despite the popular view that only children are likely to have more personality and social problems than children with siblings, the reverse seems to be true. These children have better verbal skills and do well in school. They are more popular, independent, and confident than elementary school peers. These characteristics may derive from the more frequent and intimate interaction they have with their parents. Later on they are just as likely to do well in college, careers, and marriage—and to be good parents.

Transition to Parenthood

Children transform a marriage. A number of years ago it was quite common to view the advent of children as a "crisis" of marriage. More commonly, children require adjustments in marriage that are less severe than the term "crisis" implies. However, the transition to parenthood is a complex matter and needs to be taken seriously.

PRAGMATIC ADJUSTMENTS

Broderick (1988) has pointed out that families have a set of basic resources: space, time, energy, and money. All of these resources are affected by the introduction of children into the family.

Space. Issues of space are both real and symbolic. Symbolic space involves the relationships in the family. A child forces a change in the exclusive husband-wife relationship. The new addition leads to three family relationships—husband-wife, father-child, and mother-child. In a well-functioning family these three sets of relationships are adjusted so that one does not dominate the others. The mother-child pair is a natural connection, supported by cultural values, and its predominance can be tempered by involving the father both during and after pregnancy in activities and decisions about the child.

Real space is also affected by the birth of a child. In small living quarters the new child may cramp the family further. In larger accommodations, what might have been used for other purposes is now redirected for the use of the newborn.

Time. This is an extremely scarce resource for most people, and a new child demands much of it. Even before birth the necessary planning for the birth takes time from other marital activities. This might involve shopping for clothes or furniture, finding a new and larger home, repainting the baby's room, attending Lamaze classes or similar activities. Once the baby is born, time demands multiply. Feeding, bathing, clothing, changing, and trips to the pediatrician are among the multitude of activities involved; all of these take time.

In addition to the problems of reduced time, scheduling becomes an important element in the adjustment to family life. Fitting new activities around other necessary tasks is often difficult. If both parents work there is a need for child-care arrangements. The family's nonwork schedule also needs to accommodate this new family member. Spur-of-the-moment decisions to go out—not uncommon for many couples before they have children—now are more complicated.

As the child grows up and enters into the communicative life of the family, other adjustments are necessary. No longer can parents talk just about their interests; what their child has done or is thinking or worrying about enters into family discussions.

Energy. This is a scarce commodity for most individuals, and the birth and raising of a child tax this resource. Taking care of a new baby is an enormous drain of energy for parents, primarily mothers. The variety of activities required to care for the baby is physically as well as emotionally exhausting. Fatigue is a new mother's common companion. Even when fathers are involved with their child, they tend to spend considerably less time at it than mothers; often their contribution involves playing with the child rather than accomplishing essential child care tasks.

Money. Parenthood may decrease this available resource when one parent sacrifices either a job or career advancement for it. Even if both parents continue to work, the cost of child care depletes the family's financial resources. A large percentage of family income goes to the direct support of children. Earlier it was estimated that the cost of raising a child from infancy all the way through college was approximately $250,000, overall an average of $11,000 a year. Clearly, the need for this amount of money requires many couples to adjust their earlier child-free pattern of spending.

Parental Roles

The social definition of appropriate parental roles has been changing. Modifications in gender roles have greatly influenced the nature of these roles.

TRADITIONAL VIEWS

In the past there was a sharp separation of the roles of mother and father.

Mother's Role. This involved primary responsibility for raising the children. It was her job to attend to the health, safety, comfort, and emotional needs of the child. In addition she was charged with the practical responsibilities of seeing to it that the child was fed, clothed, and changed. All of these responsibilities are often added to the woman's other role of full-time homemaker. However, research has demonstrated that caring for the home and caring for children often conflict with one another. Both take extraordinary amounts of time; even when time can be made for both, the energy that is required for each often reduces the quality of attention that can be devoted to one or the other role.

Father's Role. Historically, this involved primary responsibility for acquiring the resources needed to sustain family life. Family income, home repairs, and car maintenance were his tasks. While fathers participated in child care, it was mainly in two realms—they were the ultimate disciplinarian and they played with the child when they could. Though they may have "helped out" with some of the mundane tasks of child care, they did so because of goodwill and not as a joint responsibility with their wives. However, fathers have been shown to play an important role in influencing the gender identity of their children.

CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTIONS

The growing equality between men and women has had a major effect on parental roles. In particular, this has been influenced by the increasing number of working mothers. Also, today there is less rigidity and external definition of gender roles. In many contemporary families, there is less of a sharp separation than previously in mother's and father's roles. In egalitarian families, which are still probably in a minority but whose numbers are growing, parenthood is seen as a joint, shared responsibility. Who does what is less a consequence of predetermined roles than a result of negotiations between husbands and wives based on their preferences, skills, and occupational responsibilities.

Increasingly, fathers are getting up for their infants' midnight feedings and spending quality time with their children. Which parent stays home with a sick child is influenced by job flexibility and not just gender role. Contemporary research shows that a substantial number of fathers and mothers view child care as a shared, joint responsibility. However, in practice, there is less of a change from earlier traditional patterns than many mothers would prefer. This is partly due to the power of early socialization; most of today's parents were likely to have been taught by example and by the media that mothers have the primary child-care responsibility. Though more mothers are now in the labor force, many employers still operate under the earlier norms.

As gender role changes continue and solidify in American society, so will conceptions of parental roles. Research suggests that flexible and shared child care responsibilities are more common among two-income families. As their number continues to increase, so will more contemporary conceptions of child care.

PARENTING

The term "parenting" refers to the practice of raising children. In some places it is referred to as "socialization" and in others as "childrearing practices." In essence, these terms have been used interchangeably to denote the way in which parents carry out their parental roles and raise their children.

Parenting Styles

Parenting styles differ. Though there are social group differences in parenting, there are also some commonalities worth noting. LeMasters and DeFrain (1989) have described five frequently used parental styles that seem particularly apt.

MARTYR

This parental style is used by parents who completely devote themselves to their children. They would "do anything for their children," including sacrifice their own needs. This parental style is often accompanied by feelings of guilt on the part of the parent and results in overprotective behavior. These parents tend to spoil their children and cannot set realistic goals.

BUDDY OR PAL

This style blurs the line of generational difference between parents and children. It is most often adopted with older children or teens. Being a pal often means not imposing parental authority and letting children establish their own goals and limits. This tends to be somewhat unrealistic since parents do have both the legal and moral responsibility for raising their children. Also, this form of relationship is exceedingly complex and requires extraordinary parents to carry it off well. Real intimacy can exist only among status equals; this relationship does not exist between children and adults. Furthermore, the form is potentially dangerous, since once authority is relinquished it cannot easily be regained.

POLICE OFFICER OR DRILL SERGEANT

In many respects this style is the exact opposite of the pal/buddy model. These parents are clearly the authority figures in the family; they lay down the rules and insist on their being obeyed. This type of parent punishes a child for any infraction, no matter how minor. This style does not fit well with the general American culture, which does not encourage autocratic discipline. There is ample evidence that frequent punishment is an ineffective teaching style; censure only works if it is not constant and is combined with warmth and love. The police officer model also runs counter to the powerful influences of the peer culture, which is particularly important for adolescents.

TEACHER-COUNSELOR

The assumption behind this style is that children have vast innate potential that can be tapped and shaped by their adult socializers. Parents are seen as experts in child development theory and practice. Children and their needs are at the center of this approach, as in the martyr style. While parental commitment to the needs of their children is not as extreme in this style, the form runs the same risk of producing anxiety in the parent and spoiling the child.

ATHLETIC COACH

As with the teacher-counselor style, this mode places great emphasis on the learning ability of children. However, it is a more interactive style, with the needs of both parents and children taken seriously. Parents are seen as experts in the game of life, and are prepared to impart their knowledge to their children. They teach their children the need for reasonable rules to establish boundaries for permissible behavior, much as is required in most athletic sports. While rules are enforced, they are not the main focus of parent-child interaction. As with athletics, parents recognize that at some point they cannot "do" for their children. They can prepare them and teach them what to do, but children have to go out on the field and act on their own. The game is played by the players, not the coach.

While these are common parenting styles, they are rarely found in isolation. Some parents combine elements of two or more of these models. Parenting style is influenced by the parents' personalities, their own childrearing experiences, and the cultural values and norms of their social group.

Sociological Differences in Childrearing

Social groups differ in their parenting goals and practices. A body of research has shown some systematic differences in childrearing by social class, race, and ethnicity.

SOCIAL CLASS DIFFERENCES

There is considerable evidence that middle-class and working-class parents differ in their parenting goals and techniques. Little research is available on upper-class socialization practices. While class differences exist, the studies do not suggest that *all* middle-class parents socialize their children one way and *all* working-class parents in another. While there is considerable variation within social classes and overlap between social classes, there are some common patterns that research has consistently uncovered (e.g., Kohn, 1977; Kohn and Schooler, 1983).

Middle-Class Parents. The parents tend to focus their efforts on producing children who are independent, curious, interested in the world around them, and considerate of the needs of others. Self-direction and taking initiative are especially important childrearing goals for middle-class parents. These aims are likely to be the result of the kinds of jobs occupied by middle-class adults. Their work often involves complex, nonroutine, independent action requiring little supervision. Thus, the ability to be creative and autonomous is highly prized.

To further these parenting goals, middle-class parents are apt to use "inductive" techniques of praise, affection, and reasoning. They tend to be supportive of their children's efforts and use little physical punishment in disciplining their children. Also, there is likely to be considerable agreement between the two parents about raising their children; they are often seen by their children as having a "united front." There tends to be less differentiation in how such parents raise boys and girls, though freedom is more permissible for boys than for girls.

Working-Class Parents. On the other hand, working-class parents tend to focus their efforts on producing obedient children who are neat and clean. They expect their children to conform to the demands of others. Once again, these behavioral goals fit with the kinds of jobs that working-class children are likely to have when they grow up. They tend to have routine jobs of little complexity; they have little autonomy and are closely supervised.

The techniques of childrearing in this social class are more likely to be coercive. They involve censure, withdrawal of privileges, and physical punishment. This disciplinary style is related to a concern that children demonstrate conformity to external demands rather than to an interest in fostering self-development and initiative. Working-class parents treat boys and girls quite differently, responding more harshly to their son's misbehavior than to that of their daughter's, except in the area of sexual activity.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

In general, social class is a more important determinant of parenting than is race or ethnicity. Parents of different racial and ethnic groups tend to exhibit the childrearing goals and practices of their social class. However, discrimination often leads parents from minority groups to stress the importance of conformity. At the same time, they seek to develop both their children's self-esteem and pride in their group's heritage. Teaching their children how to adjust to the requirements of the majority while maintaining respect for their own group is an additional dilemma that parents in minority groups face.

SINGLE PARENTHOOD

Being a single parent poses special problems. These issues are discussed in chapter 19.

Parenting Across the Family Life Cycle

PARENTS OF INFANTS

Babies are very demanding. They need most things done for them, as there is little if anything at this stage that they can do for themselves. On the other hand, they sleep a lot and are not argumentative. They generally are soothed when fed, changed, and cuddled.

Some infants are more restless and active than others; some are more distressed and unhappy. Parents often respond to these variations by attributing them to their own actions. They often take credit for good babies while blaming themselves for difficult babies. In fact, both the infant's inborn temperament and the way in which parents respond to it contribute to whether a baby is easy or difficult to raise.

All infants need a warm, supportive, and moderately stimulating environment in order to mature physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. They need to learn how to deal with their world and to develop necessary motor and intellectual skills. Physical movement allows children to interact with their physical environment and is important in facilitating their physical development; hearing spoken language and responses to their attempts to speak help them to learn how to communicate. Parenting involves giving infants the encouragement and opportunity to develop these important skills.

PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

In many respects the world of preschool children is similar to that of infants. Both are relatively narrow, generally confined to the home and immediate neighborhood. However, preschoolers are developing physically at a rapid rate and are increasingly interacting with their environment. They more readily respond to language and begin to use it effectively.

A key parenting task at this time is to help establish clear and consistent limits for the child by defining which behaviors are acceptable and which are not. However, some degree of permissive flexibility is also useful. Children get angry with parents, and this is perfectly acceptable; allowing children to hit their parents in anger, though, is not. Modeling appropriate behavior—for example, not hitting a child in anger—is a useful way of teaching restraint. An adequate understanding of what can reasonably be expected from a young child needs to guide parental actions.

PARENTS OF SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

Children at this age can be considered partners in the parenting process. They have mastered many of the important physical, social, and communicative skills. They have a fairly good idea of what is acceptable to their parents and what is not. Parents at this stage continually reinforce these conceptions and encourage their children to develop and mature. Increasingly, the focus is on intellectual and social development. Cooperation between home and school is often essential.

Responsibility and autonomy emerge as important at this time. School-aged children are ready for increased responsibility. They can participate in the tasks of running the home, and they can cooperate with parents in establishing limits on their behavior. In short, they can take increasing responsibility both for themselves and for the functioning of the family. Parenting at this time involves creating an environment of increasing responsibility and independence for the growing child. Children need to be encouraged to act in terms of their own needs, but also have to learn that their actions have consequences. This realization is often difficult for parents and children.

PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS

This is not an enviable time in the life of many parents. Adolescence is a stage of transition—the youngster is too old to be considered a child but is not yet an adult. The ambiguity of this status is often responsible for the fluctuations in teenage behavior that cause parents difficulty. In addition, adolescents are going through relatively rapid physical and hormonal changes that are often difficult for them to handle. At the same time, parents are often reaching middle age and the variety of life crises this period entails. So both adults and children are in transition.

The focal points of conflict between adolescents and their parents are often autonomy and responsibility; the teenager demands the former and the parent insists on the latter. In truth both are necessary and in their reflective moments parents and adolescents realize this. The process of disengaging from or relinquishing parental authority is often complex, difficult, and frightening. Parenting takes special patience at this time to avoid the common power struggles of adolescence. Given the increased physical and intellectual stature of youth, norms for appropriate behavior are more likely to be adhered to if they are developed between adults and teenagers.

Sexuality also becomes a concern and possible battleground for both parents and teenagers. Religious, moral, and social values affect how both parties deal with the adolescent's emerging sexual needs. All available research suggests that these problems are reduced if parents and their adolescent children communicate with each other.

PARENTS OF YOUNG ADULTS

The process of parenting does not end when children become adults. Young adults have strong ties to their parents whether or not they are married or live away from home. These bonds continue throughout life. Adult children still may seek advice and counsel, not to mention material help and emotional support from their parents.

Increasingly, adult children remain in the parental home longer than has previously been true. Parenting adult children who live at home is especially complicated. Are they to be treated as adults or as one's children? These problems can be reduced when parents and children establish mutually acceptable ground rules for their interaction. In our society adults are expected to establish their own independent homes. Consequently most people consider adult children living at home to be a temporary arrangement. Wise parenting in this situation involves helping to create the conditions that permit the child to establish this independence.

The Grandparent Role. Grandparents have an enviable role. They have some of the benefits of parenthood but also can avoid most of its tribulations. They can play with their grandchildren, even babysit for them, but then go home. They often have few if any of the career pressures they had as parents, and are able to spend more time with their grandchildren.

Grandparents often provide practical help to their children. Many babysit to offer parents time for vacations or to meet career or educational needs. Some provide financial support routinely or on special occasions. Often, they continue to provide emotional support to their children as well as to their grandchildren.

Most grandparents have companionate relationship with their grandchildren. They visit them and engage in joint activities, but do not have to exercise any control over them. A small number are more heavily involved, often because they live in the same household. And an intermediate number are rather remote, largely due to their living some distance away.

Becoming a parent is a major change in a person's social status. The decision to have children is influenced by social expectations, personal considerations, economic factors, and the presumed effect on the marital relationship. Because of social and technological changes in the contemporary United States, couples are more able than previously to exercise the options of remaining child-free, postponing parenthood, or having only one child.

The transition to parenthood requires pragmatic adjustments of space, time, energy, and money previously available to the couple. The traditional parental roles were more discrete and segregated in the past than they are for many couples today. Previously the mother was in charge of the children and the father responsible for earning the family income, while today many parents share the varied aspects of the parental role.

Parenting styles differ. Parents can be martyrs, buddies, police officers, counselors, coaches or some combination of the five. Parental goals and techniques differ between working- and middle-class parents. Though there is variability with social class and overlap between social classes, working-class parents tend to emphasize obedience and conformity to norms, while middle-class parents stress autonomy, curiosity, and consideration for others. The former tend to use coercive parenting techniques, the latter more inductive practices. Racial and ethnic groups tend to be similar in childrearing to their social class. Parenting varies depending on the stage of the family life cycle.

15

Work and Family

This chapter considers the family and work, two main arenas of adult life. It is important to understand how they interact with one another, especially given changing conceptions of gender. The increasing number of dual-income families has brought both advantages and disadvantages to the individuals involved, as well as raising important issues of public policy.

TRADITIONAL CONCEPTIONS OF WORK AND FAMILY ROLES

The relationship between work and family roles in the United States has varied considerably over time. When America was a rural society there was considerable overlap between the family and work roles of most people. Both family and work at that time often centered around the family farm. Industrialization and urbanization changed this focus. Today most work is done in factories, offices or shops—all remote from people's homes. This separation also emphasizes different gender roles in the family.

Husband/Father as Provider

Even on the family farm the husband/father was expected to provide the necessities of family life. With the advent of industrialization and urbanization leading to the separation of home and work, this responsibility became even more pronounced. Few wives worked, and therefore the family became even more dependent on the economic activities of the husband. This provider role was not only important for obtaining the necessities of life, it also served as the main source of a man's identity and self-esteem. He was the "breadwinner," the person who "brought home the bacon." He was the ultimate provider of the family's material needs. This role also made him the main authority.

In this context, domestic and childrearing responsibilities, as well as nurturance and emotional support, were not viewed as central to the husband's family role. While he could participate in these activities, and some husbands did, he was not obliged to do so. His separate work role was seen as his predominant responsibility, and it took priority over family activities and obligations.

Wife/Mother as Homemaker

The focus of the wife's role was on the home and children. Even in a rural environment where they often worked alongside husbands and children on the farm, wives also had the primary responsibility for raising the children and maintaining the home. Growing industrialization and urbanization magnified the segregation of adult roles in the wife's family and further separated the family role from her work role.

Cooking, cleaning, child care, and other domestic duties are seen as important to the functioning of the family. However, traditionally, the homemaker role has been viewed as a woman's family obligation and not as an occupation. As a result, this role has not generally been included by economists in their description of the workforce, and no economic value is placed on wives' labor. Such a view furthers the segregation of family roles and work roles.

CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF WORK AND FAMILY ROLES

While there are still many families that exhibit a traditional separation between the work and family roles of husbands and wives, there have been some changes. Increasingly, husbands play a more active role in the family and more wives work outside the home. These changes tend to weaken the traditional separation between home and work roles and between the roles of husbands and wives.

Effects on Men

The primary change in men's family roles has been to increase both their involvement in and sense of responsibility for a variety of domestic and childrearing activities. At the same time, many men have begun to reevaluate their traditional and single-minded commitment to their work role.

	Hours per Week Spent on Household Tasks			
	1965		1985	
Household Tasks	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Housework				
Cooking Meals	1.3	8.4	2.0	6.9
Meal Clean-up	0.3	4.1	0.4	1.9
Housecleaning	0.4	6.7	1.4	5.1
Laundry, Ironing	0.1	5.1	0.3	2.2
Subtotal	2.1	24.3	4.1	16.1
Other Tasks				
Outdoor Chores	0.5	0.2	1.4	0.5
Repairs, etc.	1.0	0.2	1.8	0.4
Garden, Animal Care	0.2	0.5	1.0	0.9
Bills, etc.	0.8	1.8	1.7	1.6
Subtotal	2.5	2.7	5.9	3.4
All Tasks	4.6	27.0	9.8	19.5

Table 15.1 Number of Hours per Week that Men and Women, Ages 18–65, Carry Out Household Tasks, 1965 and 1985 (Adapted from Robinson [1988:26])

Sharing Household Responsibilities. Husbands are more involved in carrying out household tasks than in previous years (see Table 15.1). The number of hours that husbands spend in accomplishing household responsibilities has more than doubled over a generation. They are increasingly involved in cooking meals and a variety of household cleaning tasks. Though they have historically spent more time than their wives on repairs and outdoor chores, this difference has increased over the years. However, husbands do significantly less inside the home than their wives do. And overall they tend spend about half the time their wives do on the total range of household responsibilities. On those tasks defined as "housework," and typically viewed as part of the role of wife (e.g., cooking and cleaning), husbands spend about one-fourth of the time their wives do.

The changing conceptions of gender roles has resulted in an increase in men's sharing of household responsibilities. Despite this, domestic tasks are still significantly more likely to be carried out by women.

Child Care. Increasingly, fathers are playing a greater role in the raising of their children than their fathers did. They are more involved with their children starting with infancy, and some even before that through their participation in preparing for their child's birth. Fathers tend to treat children differently than mothers do. They are rougher in their handling of their children, tend to treat boys more favorably than girls, and are more directive and less verbal in their interactions.

Involvement of fathers in childrearing seems to have a positive effect on their children's self-esteem and academic achievement in school. This is especially evident when fathers share responsibility for the routine, everyday tasks of childrearing such as feeding, bathing, and dressing.

Househusband: A New Role for Some Men. There is a small band of men who exhibit a new role in the family. About two percent of married men have become *househusbands*; they stay home either full or part time to take care of the home and the children. They engage in this role reversal with their wives for a variety of reasons. Some have no choice; they are either unemployed or their health is too poor to permit them to work. Others wish to spend more time with their children or to give their wives the opportunity to pursue a full-time career. Still others are tired of what they perceive to be the competitive rat race in the world of work and opt out of it. The number of men who are househusbands is small but growing. However, this increase is likely to be limited by cultural values that place primary responsibility for employment outside the home on men and by the fact that men typically earn more money than women.

Rethinking a Primary Commitment to the Work Role. Under the influence of changes in gender role concepts and in the nature of work, men are increasingly reevaluating their traditional primary commitment to their job. Greater emphasis on their participation in the family has led some men to consider how to reconcile this with their work obligations. The growing number of working wives has lessened the exclusive reliance of the family on husbands' jobs. Also, the increasing bureaucratization and routinization of many jobs has made them less satisfying. As men reconsider the role of work in their lives, some no longer give it the exclusive commitment they once did. They are willing to scale back their commitments, work fewer hours, and travel less frequently. In short, these men are more likely to place work in the context of their other roles and responsibilities.

Effects on Women

Changing conceptions of work and family have been affected by technological advances in the home and on the job. As a consequence more women are in the labor force today.

CHANGES IN HOME-WORK CONNECTION

Household Responsibilities. Recent developments have affected the way women look at the homemaker role.

Being a housewife is preferred to out-of-home work by a majority of women despite changing gender role concepts; they report that they would be happy to be housewives if money were not an important consideration

(Scanzoni and Scanzoni, 1988). They perceive the rewards of the housewife role to be more satisfying than those of a working woman. These women see benefits in the increased time this role gives them for taking care of their children and their home, and the greater flexibility it offers in meeting their various needs.

Women who prefer the housewife role tend to have more traditional values about family and gender roles. They are more conservative in their outlook, and report themselves as being less aggressive, less ambitious, less intelligent, and less able to work under pressure (Stokes and Peyton, 1986). Women who work outside the home, on the other hand, tend to have more liberal and equalitarian attitudes; they have a strong sense of themselves as individuals with a variety of needs, not all of which are tied to their family roles. This orientation seems to be especially true for women working in executive, professional or managerial positions.

Technological improvements in the home have generally made housework a less arduous task. However, despite improvements in technology affecting the time spent on homemaking tasks, there has been no significant change in the total amount of time spent in fulfilling this role. This surprising finding is believed to be due to two main factors. First, while the time necessary for some tasks has shrunk, that for others has gone up. Second, labor-saving devices have led to higher standards of what is acceptable. For example, in earlier times laundry was such a difficult task that it was generally done once a week or less. Today the ease of doing laundry has led to higher expectations of cleanliness. Clothes are changed more frequently and in many families the washer and dryer are used practically every day; this is especially true in families with young children.

In short, the amount of time women spend on housework has not been reduced by advances in technology. Cowan (1983) shows that this has been true from the colonial period through the 1980s.

Child Care. Women who work outside the home clearly spend less time with their children. However, the quality of child care and the effect of mother absence do not seem to be related in any direct fashion to whether or not the mother works. Rather, they are influenced by the involvement or lack of involvement of the father in childrearing, the attitudes of both parents, the age and sex of the children, and the availability of convenient and quality child-care facilities.

Women in the Labor Force. Contemporary changes in gender roles have not only affected the family, but work roles as well.

The *prevalence of women in the labor force has increased* dramatically. Since 1950 the number of married women who work has about tripled. Currently about sixty percent of all married women work, and that number is expected to reach seventy-five percent in the next few years. Perhaps more important, the number of mothers of school-aged children who work has also tripled since 1950 and stands at almost seventy percent; today, about half of all mothers of preschool children work, a fourfold increase over the same time period. The mothers in these statistics are all part of two-parent families.

The significant presence of working women is not limited to American society. About half of all women in the world aged fifteen to sixty-four work. The highest percentage is in the former Soviet Union (about seventy-one percent) and the lowest in Latin America (about thirty percent).

Jobs are generally sex segregated; that is, some jobs are deemed more appropriate for men and others for women. In the past women typically held clerical, sales, and service jobs. In the 1960s the sex segregated nature of jobs decreased slightly as more men became teachers and social workers, and more women began to take sales jobs outside of department stores or specialty shops. The first significant reduction in sex segregation of jobs occurred in the 1970s as women entered occupations formerly dominated by men; they increasingly took professional, executive, and managerial positions.

These changes were facilitated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, especially Title VII which prohibited sex discrimination in hiring and placement, and by the executive order of President Lyndon Johnson which established a policy of affirmative action. But these legal weapons were initially focused on racial discrimination and were only applied to sex discrimination under political pressure from women's groups in the 1970s.

Despite the reduction in sex discrimination in the workplace, sex segregation still occurs *within* many occupations. Women tend to occupy the lower ranks within the occupations they have entered. Even in the professions, women often work in those carrying lower prestige and salary; for example, they are more likely to be noncollege teachers and nurses. On the other hand, men are more likely to be college professors and physicians. In the corporate world there is reported to be a "glass ceiling" for women; they can see the positions above them but are generally denied access to them.

The importance of a job is generally reflected in its salary scale. Jobs traditionally held by women tend to have lower salaries than those held by men. In the 1950s women working full time earned about sixty-four percent of the salary of men working full time; this differential was even greater in the 1970s. Despite their influx not only into the labor force but especially into professional, executive, and managerial positions in the 1980s, women's salaries remain at approximately the level of the 1950s—about sixty-three percent of those of men.

Comparable worth has been suggested as a way of dealing with the inequities in the salaries of men and women. Comparable worth establishes the basic worth of jobs through an analysis of the experience, skills, knowledge, physical and mental demands, and other factors required. Who does the job is irrelevant, as is whether the job has traditionally been a woman's or a man's job. Consequently, supporters of comparable worth argue that based on the level of skills required, secretaries and nurses (women's jobs with low pay) should earn as much as truck drivers and mechanics (men's jobs with relatively high salaries). The opponents of comparable worth base their position on the fact that wage differences are a result of historical factors, market forces, and the decision by many women to give their family roles priority over their work roles. Since the evaluation of what is comparable is basically subjective, they argue, it should continue to be determined by the impersonal forces of the market. From this point of view it is the market rather than discrimination that leads to wage differential between men and women. Proponents of comparable worth disagree, and this battle is still being played out in the courts and in various governmental agencies.

The *mommy track* has been proposed as a solution for women who want to combine family and work roles. Schwartz (1989) suggests that business, and perhaps the professions, should establish part-time positions which are important but less demanding for women who wish to combine a career with raising a family. This was immediately dubbed the "mommy track" and attacked by feminists who argued that it assumed that women and not men were responsible for child care; the critics also believed such a situation risked turning those on the mommy track into "second-class citizens." Supporters of the mommy track responded that this approach need not be limited to women; it could be a model for anyone who wishes to combine work and family roles without the undue stress that is typically involved if both are full-time commitments.

The debate over the mommy track is not as heated today as it was earlier. However, many businesses have begun to rethink how they might incorporate some of the ideas embodied in the original notion without incurring its liabilities. Some of the public policy issues involved will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

DUAL-INCOME FAMILIES

While the family with two wage earners has always been evident in the working class, it has recently become more frequent in other social classes. It is, in fact, the most common form of family in the contemporary United States. In this section we will discuss some of the problems that dual-income families face, some of the advantages of this arrangement, and the issues it poses for public policy.

Problems

ARRANGING SCHEDULES

One seemingly minor but common problem in dual-income families is the arrangement of schedules to accommodate the needs of the adults, children, and household. Work schedules have to be integrated with family schedules. Vacation times need to be coordinated. Arrangements need to be made to get the children off to school on time and decisions need to be made about who will take care of a sick child during the work week.

Managing shopping, cleaning, social engagements, and other family activities becomes more complicated in dual-income families. Spouses need to determine how to do these necessary tasks within the context of their work schedules and responsibilities. Sometimes the difficulty of these problems is reduced by the flexibility one or both partners has on the job. Sometimes the family hires domestic help. Each couple needs to decide how family responsibilities will be shared, with due allowance given to their work requirements.

HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES

Even in two-paycheck families where partners would be expected to share household tasks, wives are significantly more likely to bear this responsibility. Though it is clear that more husbands are participating in household duties, contemporary research shows that women still do three-fourths or more of this work.

In a recent study Hochschild (1989) labeled the phenomenon of the working wife's family task burden as the *second shift*. In essence, she claims employed women work two shifts. After their paid job they come home to take on the primary burden of their unpaid family job. Hochschild argues that women's second shift responsibilities come at the expense of their leisure time and sleep. A substantial portion of their evenings and weekends are spent on household activities, leaving little time for social engagements, routine entertainment or even restful quality time with their husband and children.

This overload for wives is often compounded by economic hard times, which necessitates longer hours at the workplace. Coupled with this increase in work time has been a corresponding decrease in reported hours spent at leisure pursuits. These joint pressures tend to produce more tension in the family and may be a factor in the growing divorce rate.

CHILD-CARE RESPONSIBILITIES

About half of all preschool children and three-fourths of all school-aged children have working mothers. These dual-income families cannot carry out their child-care responsibilities in the traditional manner; they must find some alternative means to do so. In an earlier time, when fewer women worked and there was less geographical mobility among extended family members, grandparents and other relatives often played a key role in child care. While this still occurs it is not as common, and several other options have been developed.

Latchkey Children. Children who are left unsupervised for at least part of the day have increased in number. Typically these are children who attend school and then spend their after-school hours unsupervised either at home or at play. It has been estimated that just under a quarter of all schoolchildren aged five to fifteen come back to an empty home after school. Contrary to popular belief, latchkey children are more frequently white and middle class; minority working-class families often depend on other family members to take care of their children while they are at work. Though latchkey children report being bored and lonely, the few studies that have been done indicate no differences between them and supervised children in academic performance, self-esteem, peer relations, or fear of going outdoors alone.

Day Care. This has become an increasingly available option for many dual-income families. It is primarily used for the preschool child. Approximately sixty percent of working mothers use some form of day care for their preschool children; about 36 percent are in home care and 24 percent in group day care. On average, it costs about $55 per week for a preschool child in day care and about $35 per week for a school-aged child. In general, home day care is less expensive than group day care.

Since day-care programs and facilities in the United States have become extensive only recently, there are few if any reliable long-term studies of their effects on children. The modest existing research is somewhat inconclusive. There is some agreement that the negative risks of day care are highest for children through about age two. Concern is focused on the lack of sustained attention and a secure adult-infant relationship. Other researchers suggest that factors such as the attitude of the mother toward her child, her self-confidence as a mother, and her desire for an independent identity are as important as the quality and number of hours her child spends in day care.

CAREER AND JOB CONFLICTS

In some families the fact that both partners work may cause conflict over job and career issues. In the traditional family husbands gained their primary satisfaction and status from their job, and wives in raising children and maintaining the home. Each had a separate sphere of influence, status, and control. In two-paycheck families, however, both husbands and wives are in the same arena—the occupational world. In some cases this may lead to conflict over differences in salary or rates of advancement on the job, especially if the wife is earning more and advancing more rapidly than the husband which is contrary to traditional cultural values. Marital difficulty may also occur over whose job requirements are given priority when they conflict.

COMMUTER MARRIAGES

Career demands in professional and managerial positions often make life difficult for the two-career family. One contemporary arrangement that deals with this problem is the commuter marriage. The partners maintain a separate residence to meet the needs of their particular careers and spend time together as a family only periodically. The available research suggests that about half of commuter couples arrange to get together every weekend. This type of marriage is often the only way some women can be married and pursue an independent career or take advantage of opportunities for advancement.

Commuter marriages have some other advantages. The partners are more able to keep their jobs and family roles separate. They often have more time to meet job demands and work to advance in their career. On the other hand, commuter couples report feelings of loneliness and isolation. They tend to become workaholics, devoting twelve to fourteen hours a day to work. The financial costs are high, since the family must maintain two residences. In addition, most couples have extraordinarily high telephone bills and spend considerable sums to travel frequently to be together. They tend to develop segregated friendship and support networks. Most of all, commuter marriages are difficult on children who often cannot easily comprehend the separation of their family. For obvious reasons, most marriages of this type do not involve children.

Commuter marriages are more easily handled by those who have a firm marriage and family base, and who see each other on a regular and frequent schedule. Despite the popular view that such marriages lead to frequent extramarital affairs and divorce, commuter marriages are less likely to end in divorce than other forms of marriage. In part this is a consequence of the strong commitment the partners have to the marriage and the effort they put in to maintain it in face of the obvious difficulties involved.

Advantages

GREATER FAMILY INCOME

Two-paycheck families tend to have a higher income than those with only one breadwinner. The extra money may be necessary to meet the increasing cost of living, or to provide an enhanced lifestyle. Whether for necessities or for luxuries, two paychecks are likely to be better than one.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN

For many dual-income families, the wife's decision to work is part of her desire to have an autonomous status independent of her family responsibilities. Increasingly, women are demanding a choice in how to fulfill their individual and personal needs. Some women find this fulfillment in paid employment. This is especially true for the increasing number of women who obtain a university education and wish to use the talents they have developed.

INCREASED EQUALITY BETWEEN MARITAL PARTNERS

Most societies value outside employment more highly than family responsibilities. As a consequence, men generally have higher status in society than women. In dual-income families, however, both partners engage in outside work that tends to reduce the status difference between them. This status difference translates into power, and a number of studies of marital power have demonstrated that women's power increases in the family in direct relation to their employment outside the home. Working women are more likely to have similar experiences with their working husbands. These couples tend to share common interests and have a similar view of the world because of their joint involvement in the world of work.

MARITAL SATISFACTION

Most studies find little relationship between marital satisfaction and whether or not the wife works. When there is a difference, two-income families have somewhat lower marital satisfaction levels due to the overload on the working wives. Dual-income marriages, especially those in which wives are at top levels of education and professional achievement, have a higher divorce rate than marriages in which the wife does not work outside the home. One explanation offered is that educated, professional women are more economically independent and are less likely to marry initially or to stay in an unsatisfactory relationship; they are also less likely to remarry after divorce than other types of wives.

Dual-income couples tend to exhibit greater role flexibility. The partners are able to deal with problems more easily and to shift from more traditional concepts of family roles. This advantage is more observable in families in which husbands and wives have discussed and agreed on having a dual-income family, and this agreement enhances marital satisfaction.

Public Policy Issues

INCREASED QUALITY DAY-CARE FACILITIES

Despite the increasing need for quality day-care facilities, there is no increase in such options. The United States is virtually alone among industrialized nations in lacking a national policy for child care. *Headstart,* one of the few national programs in this area, provides education and health support for children from low-income families. It has been a highly effective program, but child-care experts point out that it has not received the level of funding to allow it to be extended to all qualifying families. The Child Care Opportunities for Families Act of 1985 was a step toward increasing the availability of both day-care facilities and trained child-care workers.

But research has demonstrated the continued lack of an adequate number of day-care programs and facilities to meet the national need.

Another problem is location. Many mothers prefer to have day-care facilities close to their job. In this way they can visit their children, maintain contact with them, and be reassured that the children's needs are being adequately met. As a consequence, some employers have created day-care facilities at the work site. However, at present it is estimated that only about one in ten employees have this kind of facility available to them.

FLEXTIME

Workers using flextime are able to schedule their work hours, within limits, to meet other needs. For example, the work day might start at 7:30 A.M. and end at 3 P.M., with a reduced lunch period. This schedule could accommodate a parent with a child in school and prevent the need for after-school day care. Another flextime option is to work fewer days of longer hours each week. At the present time about twelve percent of full-time workers are able to take advantage of some form of flextime.

JOB SHARING

Another way to take family needs into account in the workplace is through job sharing. In this practice a full-time position is reorganized in order to provide part-time employment for two people. In some cases the single job is shared by husband and wife. In general, however, job sharing is seen as only a temporary solution to the problem of finding desirable jobs for both husband and wife in the same area. It is also often only possible for professional positions.

Job sharing often results in greater marital satisfaction as couples can offer each other support, share the care of their children, and divide up the domestic responsibilities. On the negative side, there is only one income available to the family, and what are technically half-time jobs often require more than half the amount of work a full-time position entails.

FAMILY AND PARENTAL LEAVE

The increasing number of women of childbearing age in the labor force has led to a rise in the number of working women who require maternal leave. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 requires employers to treat pregnancy as they would any short-term illness or injury by providing necessary sick leave and disability benefits. This act provides for *maternity leave* and only affects women. Recently a number of states have enacted policies providing for *parental leave* in which either parent can be absent from work to care for their newborn or newly adopted child or to care for a child who is ill. In some cases fathers are given time off automatically at the birth of their baby. Many employers also have a *family leave* policy that allows workers to care for a seriously ill parent or spouse. These are generally unpaid leaves in addition to vacation time and regular sick leave.

In 1990 Congress passed legislation to require most employers to provide up to twelve weeks of family leave for workers. However, President Bush vetoed the bill insisting that this kind of arrangement should not be imposed through legislation but should be negotiated between employers and employees. Many child-care scholars have pointed out, however, that practically all other industrialized nations have a national maternity leave and benefit program, and many have a family leave policy as well. A similar bill was passed and signed by President Clinton in 1993.

Traditionally, job and family duties were separate. The wife took care of the family and the husband worked for pay outside of the home. Though still predominantly the responsibility of wives, more and more husbands have a greater involvement in household and child-care duties. Some have begun to rethink their primary commitment to the job, and a few have become househusbands.

If economic considerations were not involved, a majority of women, particularly those with traditional values, would choose to be homemakers rather than to work outside the home. Surprisingly, however, though improved technology has made housework easier, it has not reduced the amount of time women spend at it. Working mothers spend less time with their children than housewives. The number of working mothers has increased significantly over the past third of a century. However, they tend to work in "women's jobs" that pay less than "men's jobs," though pressure to establish comparable worth as a salary standard has been gaining momentum. An alternative suggested for women who wish to work and raise a family is the "mommy track."

Dual-income families are the wave of the future. Their problems include arranging schedules to meet the needs of all family members and dealing with necessary household and child-care responsibilities. The last is addressed by the growing day-care industry, which still offers too few necessary spaces. Career and job conflicts are also problems in two-income families; a small number of couples address these problems by having commuter marriages. On the other hand, these families have greater incomes at their disposal, are better able to meet the needs of many women for an identity independent of the family, and exhibit increased equality and flexibility. There seems to be no simple and direct relationship between marital satisfaction and working wives.

Several public policy issues emerge from the increase in dual-income families. The need for more and better day care has been partially addressed by legislation. Work policies that take the family into account are only in their infancy. These include flextime, job sharing, and family and parental leaves.

16

Economic Aspects of Family Life

This chapter considers the economics of family life. While marriage is more than just an economic union, its financial aspects are important. They are affected by national economic trends and vary over the course of the family life cycle. It is important to establish and carry out a family budget for major expenditures. Savings, investments, insurance, credit, and estate planning are useful elements in meeting family needs.

MARRIAGE AS AN ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Earlier it was pointed out that though marriage is more than a sexual relationship, its sexual aspects are integral to its success. The same is true of the financial elements of family life. Acquiring the economic resources necessary to the family and using them wisely are part of the daily dynamics of marriage. Family finances are affected by the national and international economic environment, and change over the course of the family life cycle.

The National Economy and the Family

POST–WORLD WAR II ECONOMIC TRENDS

World War II created a period of economic expansion in the United States that lasted through the 1960s. During this time incomes rose and most people experienced a feeling of economic well-being. Consumer products were widely available. People gobbled up black-and-white and then color television sets. The housing market was booming and, with federally financed highway building programs, the suburbs around most major cities expanded rapidly. New cars were available, and both domestic and international travel exploded.

Credit cards became the common medium of exchange, and families built up large amounts of debt through mortgages and financed purchases. This buying spree fueled economic growth and led to the belief that the economy would continue its upward trend. The economic expansion at the time lessened concern about the accumulating financial liabilities.

Inflation. In the early 1970s the buying spree spurred a sharp increase in the rate of *inflation*, a rapid and continual rise in prices due to the greater availability of money and credit than of goods or services to purchase. In short, a dollar buys less during a period of inflation. Inflation rose faster than salaries, reducing the real purchasing power of most Americans by about 20 percent. The oil crises of the middle 1970s made the situation worse. Energy costs burst earlier bounds, driving up the costs of gasoline, home heating fuel, and many manufactured goods.

Recession. The 1980s saw a substantial *recession*, a considerable slowdown in economic activity and a sharp rise in unemployment. Much of this unemployment was structural and not temporary; America's industrial base was substantially reduced and became less competitive internationally. Labor unions were weakened and forced to concede on pay cuts and benefits. Remaining industry moved from its traditional location in the northeast to a more hospitable economic and geographical climate in the south and southwest; some went overseas to countries with considerably lower labor costs. While the service sector of the economy was expanding, jobs there tended to be lower paying than those lost in the industrial sector.

The economic expansion resulting from World War II and the immediate postwar period came to an abrupt halt in the 1970s. However, this decline was not uniform for all people; the changes widened the gap between rich and poor. The income of families at the upper end of the class structure continued to increase, those in the middle remained relatively static, and those at the lower end actually declined (see Table 16.1). This last point led to an increase in the number of families living below the officially defined level of poverty.

Effects on Family Life. These general changes in the national economy are played out in the lives of families.

The *cost of living* rose as a consequence of inflation. More money than previously was required to buy the same items. Consequently, families were faced with two options. One, they could learn to lower their standard of living. They could buy fewer clothes, eat less food, enter their children in public rather than private educational institutions, take fewer or no vaca-

	Income Levels				
Year	Under $10,000	$10,000–24,999	$25,000–49,999	$50,000–99,999	Over $100,000
1970	10.4	28.6	43.5	15.6	1.8
1980	11.0	29.0	40.3	17.7	2.0
1988	10.8	26.6	36.9	21.8	3.9

Table 16.1 Percent Distribution of Families in the United States by Income Level (1988 dollars)
(Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census [1989], Table 7)

tions, live in a less expensive residence, or decrease their expenditures in a variety of other ways.

Two, they could seek ways of increasing their income faster than inflation. One way to do this was for more family members to seek employment. To some extent, the phenomenal increase of women in the labor force was due in large part to the economic necessities stemming from runaway inflation during the 1970s and 1980s.

Whichever option was chosen, the family was severely affected by national economic trends. Either their standard of living was lowered or the pattern of family life was substantially altered.

Unemployment resulted from the slowdown in economic activity. Even in the best of economic conditions there is a 4 to 5 percent unemployment rate in the United States. However, in 1991 the unemployment rate rose sharply to an official level of about 7 percent, and considerably higher for selected populations. The unemployment rate of African American youth in inner cities was at least twice as high as the national figure.

Unemployment clearly reduces family income. However, unemployment is not only an economic problem for families. It affects their health and normal functioning. Unemployment typically means the termination of health benefits that accompany many jobs. The family either has to purchase some form of health insurance, pay on a fee-for-service basis, or forego some medical care. The uncontrollable rise in the cost of health care has made the first two options very difficult for most people. The last option puts the family at serious risk.

Not only is the family's health affected by unemployment, but also its typical pattern of activities and relationships. Numerous studies of the effect of the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s document the loss of status of the former breadwinner within the family, along with increases in conflict and psychological stress for the whole family.

Homelessness and hunger have increased recently, largely due to the poor economy. It has been estimated that on any given night over three-quarter of a million Americans are homeless and three million Americans go hungry. And more than 25 percent of the homeless in this country are families, mostly single mothers and their young children. In some inner cities these families constitute almost 75 percent of the homeless. While not all of these people became homeless because of national economic factors a significant number did.

Normal family life is simply not possible under conditions of homelessness and hunger. Most such families lack a consistent support system. They often suffer from varying degrees of depression and general poor health. Official provisions for homeless people are often inadequate at best, and dangerous at worst. While homelessness and hunger have long existed in the United States, these problems are approaching epidemic proportions in some communities due largely to worsened economic conditions.

Economic Factors over the Family Life Cycle

The role of economic factors in marriage varies over the family life cycle. Financial costs escalate with the arrival and raising of children. Economic difficulties may add to the strains of adjustment required in marriage and family life. Contributions of grown children to family income may alleviate some of this growing financial burden. Careful planning and budgeting is often useful to deal with the changing economic situation of families.

BEFORE MARRIAGE

A couple's economic planning and activities before marriage will affect the financial partnership they form through marriage. As more couples marry at somewhat older ages than previously, they often have accumulated economic assets and liabilities.

Many couples discuss whether to pool these assets and liabilities or to keep them separate. In addition, planning for the joint assets and liabilities which accrue during marriage is essential. How the couple is to divide responsibility for family needs and financial decisions needs to be clarified. Some of these decisions are increasingly embodied in prenuptial contracts.

THE MARITAL COUPLE WITH NO CHILDREN

At this time, couples often have a substantial percentage of their income available for entertainment, recreation, leisure or other personal desires. Their expenses are lower than when they have children, and many couples at this time have two incomes. Because of the financial latitude afforded them, some couples at this stage do not commit themselves to a budget or a financial plan.

FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Family expenses increase dramatically with the arrival of children. Clothes and food are two of the most obvious additional costs. Expenses for medical care, child care, increased cleaning and recreation, school trips, and many other factors are initially less obvious. Many families take the opportunity at this time to establish some kind of budgetary and financial plan both for the present and the future.

FAMILIES WITH TEENAGE AND YOUNG-ADULT DEPENDENT CHILDREN

The family probably has its greatest expenses during this period, and is in the greatest need of careful budgeting and financial planning. The food, clothing, and recreational needs of teenagers and young adults are substantially higher than for young children. If children attend college, the costs increase astronomically. Even public university costs are likely to exceed $10,000 a year; private universities require about double that amount, and the costs of both have been continually rising at about twice the rate of inflation.

In working-class families, adolescent and young adult children often have to work in order to help meet the rising costs of raising a family with grown children. This is becoming increasingly true of many middle class families as well. In fact, one concern of university faculty and administrators is that many students are employed and that deflects their energies and attention from their studies. While understanding the economic necessity for many students to work, faculty and administrators are worried about the impact this has on students' education.

As discussed earlier, an increasing number of adult children have moved back to the parental home because of difficult economic times. Their parents have been labeled the *sandwich generation* because they are caught between the needs of their adult children and their own parents, who are living longer than previously.

FAMILIES IN RETIREMENT

It is not uncommon for retirees to suffer significant financial loss. While their expenses drop after retirement, so does their income, sometimes by as much as 50 percent. In the past the fixed income of retirees was more devastated by inflation than the salaries of those still working. However, recent cost-of-living increases built into social security payments has helped to alleviate that difficulty for some. On the other hand, the phenomenal rise in health care costs combined with the cutback in Medicaid support and the high cost of private health insurance have increased the financial difficulties for many retired families.

FAMILY BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

Planning: Establishing Priorities

There are many advantages to financial planning. It encourages families to consider carefully what they have and what they want. These decisions help families to clarify their personal and family goals, many of which depend on economic resources. Planning induces people to look toward the future as well as at the present.

Financial planning and budgeting demand a realistic assessment of how the family income should be and actually is spent. A budget is a guide, not a straitjacket. It needs to be flexible to take into account changing circumstances. Lee and Zelenak (1987: 261–263) have outlined some of the concrete advantages of having a family financial plan.

ADVANTAGES OF FINANCIAL PLANNING

Encourages Rational Use of Income. A family's financial plan reduces reliance on past practices, conspicuous consumption or being overly influenced by media advertising.

Helps the Family Manage Income Changes. A financial plan eases the adjustment a family must make when it experiences a sharp increase or decrease in its income. The pattern of previous expenditures serves as a guide for any necessary alterations.

Provides Easier Adjustment to Changes in Family Size. Alterations in the size of the family will necessitate different patterns of expenditures. This adjustment is more easily accomplished through systematic rational planning.

Assists in Planning Future Major Expenditures. Rational planning involves consideration of future needs. A sound financial plan requires putting away money in anticipation of future needs. Thus, the likelihood that large sums of money would be required at one time and on short notice is substantially reduced.

Assures Priority to Essential Needs. With planning, those goods and services that are linked to important family goals can be given priority.

Assists in Using the Family's Discretionary Income. Most families have discretionary income. A good financial plan helps them decide how to allocate it.

Helps to Identify Unnecessary Expenditures. Some expenditures are unnecessary or at least less important than others. Having to plan and make rational choices allows the family to sort out the necessary from the unnecessary items.

Creating a Budget

The actual creation of a workable budget involves several considerations. Many families using budgets find it useful to commit the following steps to paper so as to see the issues clearly.

STEPS IN CREATING A FAMILY BUDGET

Examine the Family's Economic Situation. List all the assets and liabilities of the family. These include investments and savings as well as various kinds of debt.

Establish Family Goals. Decide priorities for expenditures. Should revolving credit loans be paid off first? Should money be put away consistently for children's higher education? Should the family take at least one major vacation a year? How much savings should be budgeted?

Estimate Family Income. Include present salaries and likely raises. Also list miscellaneous income from bonuses, tips, gifts, commissions, etc. Be realistic.

List All Expenditures. Write down all money spent for at least a month. Include items such as rent/mortgage payments, credit costs, and utility expenses, which are often billed on a monthly basis.

Prepare a Budget. Various forms can be used to create a family budget (see Fig. 16.1). Some families budget themselves on a weekly basis, others by the month. Neither is automatically better than the other. Budgets work best when they conform to the family's behavioral style and income and expenditure patterns. The budget should list all income and expenses, real and projected, on the schedule that is deemed useful.

Complete the Budget Process. Even the ideal budget is worthless unless it is carried out. Two elements are important to successful family budgeting—responsibility and flexibility.

Responsibility in budgeting requires keeping records and sticking to the plan. Many people find it difficult to keep accurate daily records of what they spend. Without this record no real planning is possible. It is the fundamental data base upon which rational spending depends. And families must keep close to their budget plan if it is to be of any use.

Flexibility is also required. Few people can plan all expenditures precisely or predict inevitable changes that will occur both in income and expenses. Therefore the budget should be a *guide* to family economic activity, not an ironclad contract. Sometimes it is necessary and desirable to shift money between categories. Less spent on food this month can be placed in savings or toward a vacation next month. What is critical is sticking with the general plan and the "bottom line"; internal shifts within

	Month											
Budget Item	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Net Income												
Wage Earner 1												
Wage Earner 2												
Expenses												
Food												
Housing:Rent/Mortgage												
Operations												
Furnishings												
Clothing												
Person 1												
Person 2												
Personal Expenses												
Person 1												
Person 2												
Transportation												
Personal Care (toiletries)												
Medical/Dental Care												
Insurance (car, home, life)												
Taxes												
Savings												
Recreation/ Entertainment												
Education												
Miscellaneous (papers, gifts)												

Fig. 16.1 Sample Form of Monthly Family Budget

any category, as long as they are not consistently in the same category and not substantial, are not important. If, however, shifts of funds among categories becomes frequent the budget plan likely needs to be reviewed and possibly revised.

Major Expenditures

All families have some common major expenditures. Each family must secure housing, purchase food, probably buy at least one car, provide for children, protect the health of its members, and arrange for recreation and entertainment. Most of these costs reflect recurring items and can be included in any family budget.

HOUSING

The cost of maintaining a residence is often the single most expensive item in a family's budget. As a rule, monthly housing costs should be no higher than one week's net income; this translates to somewhere around 25 to 30 percent of a family's monthly income. However, the high cost of housing today has caused many families to pay a much higher percentage of their income for housing. Some working-class families are paying about 50 percent of their monthly salary for housing. In these instances other elements of the family's budget need to be adjusted accordingly.

Home Ownership. This is part of the American dream. Owning a home carries greater social status than renting. Homes typically have more space than apartments and thus are likely to afford more privacy and comfort. Owning a home also leads to tax benefits since the interest on the mortgage is deductible. Equity is built up through home ownership; when the house is sold, the family gets the benefit of the selling price less the remaining principal on the mortgage and a capital gains tax. In times of rising real estate values this amount can be considerable. However, since real estate values have been falling recently, little equity has been realized through the sale of the family home. An increasing number of families have even been losing money as a result of having to sell their house in a depressed market.

The *cost* of owning a home is high. In 1989 the median sale price of a new single-family house was about $120,000, with considerable variation depending on geographical location. In order to buy a house the buyer initially pays 20 percent of the sales price and finances the rest through a mortgage.

Mortgages come in two basic forms. A *fixed-rate mortgage* carries an interest rate that stays constant throughout the term of the mortgage, typically for either fifteen or thirty years. While the interest is somewhat higher than the other form of mortgage, it is constant and predictable. An *adjustable rate mortgage*, on the other hand, has an initially lower interest rate; however, this varies with the condition of the financial market. Typically these mortgages (called ARM) have both a yearly cap and a lifetime cap that limits their ability to rise. Fixed rate mortgages are more advantageous for those not willing to take the risk that their payments will rise, and for those likely to continue to own their home for a long period of time. ARMs are useful for risk takers and for short-term ownership.

Other types of home ownership are possible. Besides mobile homes, two new types of home ownership have become popular. These provide some of the benefits of single-owner homes but avoid some of their problems. They often include common leisure facilities such as a swimming pool, tennis courts, game rooms, and even a golf course. There is often a central maintenance staff that handles all repairs and takes care of the grounds.

A Cooperative. This is an apartment building or complex established as a nonprofit corporation in which each occupant owns a proportionate share. There is an initial large payment, often financed through a mortgage, for the apartment and a monthly charge for maintenance and taxes. A board of directors is elected to manage the facility and from whom occupants must receive approval before selling, renting, refinancing, or substantially renovating their apartment.

A Condominium. This is similar to a cooperative in that the occupant shares the cost of the common facilities and pays a common monthly fee for maintenance and taxes. However, all occupants purchase their own units rather than a share in a nonprofit corporation and they do not assume financial responsibility for the other apartments, which is the case for cooperatives. Also, while condominium owners do elect people to supervise the facility, they do not need anyone's permission to sell, refinance or renovate their unit.

FOOD

Food generally takes up from 15 to 20 percent of a family's disposable income. However, poor families often spend a much higher proportion of their income on food, sometimes approaching 50 percent, while the wealthy may spend only about 10 percent of their income on food. People who eat out frequently spend more for food than those eating primarily at home. Fast food restaurants and take-out establishments have seen a phenomenal growth in the past decade due to the increase in dual-income families.

What and how much to eat is becoming the concern of many Americans. Dieting has become a national pastime and people are more aware of the nutritional value of food. Many are trying to reduce their levels of cholesterol and fat, both of which have been implicated in heart disease and other health problems. Grains and fiber are also prized as a way of decreasing the chances of developing certain types of cancer.

Consumer groups have become more active in making shoppers aware both of the nutritional value and the cost of food. They have pressured the federal government and corporations to improve their packaging and labeling practices. They have urged shoppers to buy more generic rather than brand name products and to buy in bulk to reduce cost. Consumers are urged to read carefully the ingredients on package labels. Perishable items now carry information about the latest date they should be purchased. In short, consumers have become more sophisticated food shoppers.

THE FAMILY CAR

As American society became suburbanized during the 1950s, cars became a necessity for many people. Public transportation was poor or nonexistent in the suburbs, and a car was needed to get to work and for practically any form of entertainment or recreation outside of the home. Since cars are expensive, most people finance their car purchases over several years. This cost becomes a recurrent monthly item in the family budget.

New cars depreciate rapidly in value. Typically they decrease by about 20 percent of the purchase price after the first year and about 10 percent the following year. Consequently, many families purchase used cars. The cost of a car is not limited to its purchase price, and a family budget needs to reflect the cost of gas, insurance, maintenance and so forth.

CHILDREN

The substantial cost of having children was discussed earlier in this chapter and in chapter 14. It is important to include these costs in the family budget.

HEALTH CARE

The high cost of health care is obvious to most people. Though some people have this cost taken care of through their employment, many do not; between twenty and thirty million people in the United States do not have their health care covered by their job. Even those who have health benefits on the job often have to pay toward these benefits in two ways. Most pay a set amount of money from their paycheck, and some also pay a small co-payment fee each time they use a medical service.

Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs). These are one of the common elements in contemporary health care delivery systems. For a prepaid fee the person is entitled to use the service of an HMO health care center that typically has a variety of physicians to deal with most medical and health problems. HMOs limit the consumer's choice of physician to those in the group, but they do provide a range of necessary services. Younger and working-class families are more likely to use HMOs because of their lower costs.

Health Insurance Plans. These plans are the other major way of providing for the health care needs of the family. Individual health insurance policies are extremely expensive and some people with serious medical problems or in risky occupations may not be able to get coverage at any cost. Many workers have their family's health needs covered by their job through their participation in a group health plan.

Over the past two decades there has been an ongoing debate in the United States over providing medical coverage for all people. The political and economic arguments have left the basic issue unresolved, though the development of Medicaid for the poor and Medicare for the elderly has provided help to some people. But the recent economic recession has led to cutbacks in these programs, making them less valuable to those using them.

RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

The cost of entertainment and recreation varies depending on the needs and behavioral style of families. Some use inexpensive modes of entertainment, such as watching television at home or attending the local movies or bowling alleys. Others pay much more to attend the theater or to travel. Some families entertain friends casually with drinks, coffee and cake or a modest barbecue. Others have lavish dinners or entertain by taking their friends out to an expensive restaurant.

The entertainment item in the budget varies, but it is also adjustable depending on the cost of fixed items such as housing, utilities, children, and health care. However, entertainment and recreation are often necessary to family well-being. They provide outlets for tension and a positive experience for those involved. While not at the same level of necessity as food or housing, they are nonetheless important. Wise families include some funds in their budget for these activities.

Planning for the Future

SAVINGS

Money regularly deposited into a savings account in a bank, credit union, or similar financial institution earns a fixed rate of interest. The federal government guarantees the safety of these deposits up to $100,000 per account in most financial institutions. Savings has been the way Americans have provided a cushion to meet emergencies or to accumulate enough money to buy something expensive. Financial experts have generally recommended a savings cushion of at least six months' salary to cover emergencies. With the availability of a variety of governmental programs for social and health services as well as on-the-job coverage, many people do not believe that it is necessary to have that much of a safety net.

American attitudes toward savings have changed in recent decades. There is greater emphasis today on consumption, on having the good life now rather than putting away money for emergencies or the future. In addition, greater opportunities for investment offering better return, especially during times of high inflation and low bank interest rates have made traditional saving practices appear less desirable. The recent financial disaster in the savings and loan industry shook people's faith in the security of savings.

Banks have been offering *certificates of deposit (CDs)*, which generally earn higher interest rates than standard savings accounts. Money is placed in a CD for a specified amount of time with a fixed rate of interest. If the money is taken out before the CD matures there is often a steep penalty. *Money market accounts* offer an interest rate between simple savings and CDs, but have no penalty for early withdrawal as long as a specified balance is maintained in the account.

Most people have checking accounts in banks. This mechanism facilitates the payments of routine bills by mail and provides a useful record of such transactions. In some financial institutions checking accounts earn interest if some minimum balance is maintained.

INVESTMENTS

Always available to the wealthy, investments have become more democratized. They are now a common instrument for both short-term and long-term financial security for a wide range of people. In essence, investment is the use of money to make money, like savings, but more risky. Treasury bills, mutual funds, stocks, and bonds are among the variety of investment instruments available. Choices among these possibilities are complex and often require either great familiarity with financial markets or the assistance of a professional.

In choosing an investment, several factors need to be taken into account. How much risk is the person willing to take? For how much return on the money invested? How much "liquidity" is required by the investor? What are the tax consequences? How diversified are the investments? What is the present and likely future state of the financial market? Given the range of these concerns, it is unlikely that any simple general prescription for investment can be offered that would meet the needs of all people. As a rule investments bring greater return than simple savings or insurance policies, though often at the cost of greater risk. Each family needs to consider its own financial situation and goals to determine the best way to plan for its short-term and long-term financial needs.

INSURANCE

Most people have some form of life insurance. There are two basic forms of life insurance policies.

Term Insurance. These policies provide protection to the survivors should the insured die during a specified period of time, or term; this is typically one, five, ten or twenty years. This type of policy has no value other than offering some measure of financial security to survivors. Most people are also covered by *Social Security*, which is in part a life insurance policy people pay for through payroll deductions. Social Security also provides a death benefit and "survivor's insurance" under certain conditions.

Insurance Plus Investment. This is another type of life insurance, called straight life, endowment insurance, or limited-payment life. In straight life the premium is paid throughout the person's life and the beneficiary is paid the "face amount" (an initially agreed upon amount that contributes to determining the premium) upon the insured's death. This type of policy builds up equity during the insured's lifetime, against which the insured can borrow at low interest rates. Endowment and limited payment life insurance require payments only for a certain number of years; otherwise they are similar to straight life.

Which type of life insurance to buy depends on a person's goals as well as other aspects of any financial security plan. Professional insurance agents are useful though many are associated with only one company and thus are unlikely to be able to provide the widest range of options.

Credit

America has become a credit society. Most large purchases are made on credit. In most cases a small amount of money is paid initially, with a larger amount to be paid over some specified period of time; this is called *installment financing*. In order to delay the full payment some amount of interest must be paid to the lender. Most people purchase their homes, cars, and large appliances in this way. Installment buying may be very useful to meet emergencies, to take advantage of short-term sales or to establish a family. However, the cost of using credit is high and its use requires careful consideration. For example, the total cost of a mortgage is considerably greater than the actual money borrowed; a family taking out a thirty-year fixed-rate mortgage of $100,000 at 10 percent interest will pay the bank more than $300,000 before the mortgage debt is paid off. Few people calculate the total cost of an item when they purchase it on credit.

CREDIT CARDS

Today most families have at least one credit card, which they use to buy clothes, use for vacation travel and hotels, and a variety of other purchases. Credit cards carry interest rates ranging from 12 to 22 percent. Consumers need to shop for the most advantageous credit card. Many large department stores offer credit cards, as do most of the major gasoline companies. Bank credit cards have a credit limit and offer a thirty-day grace period for payment without interest. Other cards require payment within thirty days and charge no interest to the consumer; their costs are borne by the businesses that accept their cards.

CONSUMER LOANS

A number of financial institutions offer loans at specified interest rates to buy a car, boat or home, to renovate a home, to purchase furniture, and so forth. The rates vary from bank to bank based on the credit history of the borrower and on the nature of the purchase. Consumer finance companies also make loans to poor credit risks or those without a credit history, but the cost of these loans is much higher than that of conventional ones. Loans can be made against certain types of life insurance policies, as discussed earlier. Recently *home equity loans* have become common. Those who own their own homes can often borrow up to 70 to 80 percent of the equity value of their homes, the market value of the home less the remaining mortgage. These interest rates tend to be variable rather than fixed. Some experts have become increasingly concerned about people using their home to support a home equity loan on top of a mortgage; they fear an increase in home forfeitures as a consequence in the current depressed economic environment.

Planning for Retirement and Death

RETIREMENT

Social security provides some measure of protection for many people when they retire or when a family member dies. In addition, many workers have some form of retirement plan from their place of employment. Currently, planning for one's own retirement has become somewhat easier. Private pension plans such as *Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)* for employed workers and *Keogh plans* for the self-employed have emerged with substantial tax benefits. For example, the tax on interest paid on these accounts is deferred until retirement, and most individuals are in a lower tax bracket at that time. Under certain conditions the money placed in these plans reduces the present income subject to tax, providing a further benefit.

DEATH

Most people do not like to think about dying and often do not plan for the financial consequences to survivors. *Estate planning* takes into account the needs of survivors and the tax implications of the allocation of resources from the deceased to survivors. It is a rational way to insure that the wishes of a person will be carried out after death and in a way that maximize the resources distributed to beneficiaries.

In a number of states the distribution of assets of a person dying *intestate*, without a will, are decided by the courts. In these circumstances the survivors are often likely to lose a considerable portion of the assets they normally would have received. A *will* is a legal document specifying how a person's assets are to be distributed upon death and specifying an executor to carry out its terms. A will can be changed at any time as long as the process of change is done in accordance with certain legal requirements. A will is frequently filed with a person's attorney for safekeeping and execution upon death.

Marriage is an economic as well as social partnership. The economic boom of World War II and its aftermath led to a rising standard of living for most families. However, the rise in inflation in the 1970s raised the prices of most goods and services and created hardships for many families. The sustained recession of the 1980s led to considerable unemployment, which affected the economic health of many families. The recession induced more women to enter the labor force to make up for lost or reduced family income. It also increased homelessness and hunger in the United States.

The economic aspects of family life change at different points in the family life cycle. Children reduce the disposable income available to the family, particularly when there are teenage and young adult children in the home. Retired families often suffer drastic changes in their lifestyle due to reductions in income and rising health costs.

Financial planning helps families establish goals and priorities. Budgets need to be realistic, responsible, and flexible. They need to account for the major expenditures of housing, food, transportation, raising children, health care, and recreation. Planning for the future includes putting money aside in savings or insurance, or investing through one of the variety of financial instruments available. Estate planning and the making of a will extends financial security to survivors.

Credit has become a major means of supporting the economic needs of families. People frequently buy on installment, use credit cards, or take out loans to finance their needs. The full cost of an item purchased on credit is often high and not fully recognized.

17

Stress, Crises, and Marital Strength

All families face difficulties. Stress often creates a crisis. The nature of stress, the kinds of crises it produces, and how families deal with the crises vary. Different types of marital strength both counteract stress and contribute to the quality of family life.

STRESS AND STRESSORS

Stress

Everyone experiences *stress*, a state of tension that challenges a person's ability to adapt to some physical, psychological, or social experience. Physical stress may result from illness or fatigue. Feelings of inadequacy or guilt may cause psychological stress. And stress caused by unemployment is social in nature. The variety of types of stress have in common the taxing of a person's ability to adapt to the precipitating cause.

Primary and Secondary Stress. Sometimes stress feeds on itself. There is an initial *primary stress*, an event or experience that leads to a stress response. For example, a wife may find out that her husband has been having a serious extramarital affair. This information makes her angry and produces a primary stress reaction. She may also begin to blame herself and feel guilty, creating secondary stress. *Secondary stress*, then, results from primary stress and often serves to maintain the original stress reaction. Actions that create secondary stress may prolong the primary stress.

Some Theories of Stress

Of the theories of stress, Selye's approach has commanded the most attention. More recent research has suggested that Selye's view needs to be modified somewhat to take into account both individual and situational variability.

SELYE'S GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME (GAS)

In Selye's (1976) view, the body adapts to stress in three stages.

Alarm Reaction. This sets the body's physiological defenses in motion. Hormones are produced that arouse the body and put it on alert. The *sympathetic nervous system* used for emergency situations takes control of the bodily organs from the *parasympathetic nervous system* used for daily, routine activities. In short, the body mobilizes to deal with the stress. As the mind and body enter a state of shock, a person often experiences a drop in temperature and blood pressure and can't think clearly.

Resistance. This occurs when the stress continues. Other hormones are produced to reduce the initial shock. These adrenal hormones raise the body temperature and blood pressure to normal levels and produce considerable energy to deal with the stress. It has often been noted that people under stress seem to have considerable energy and strength; the mobilization of the body's resources at this stage is what produces such a phenomenon. This stage can last from a few minutes to years, though this level of bodily alert takes a heavy toll on bodily resources.

Exhaustion. The final stage for the body if the stress is not relieved is exhaustion. The parasympathetic nervous system reasserts control and the body may experience a return to a state of shock as the level of adrenal hormones decreases. Continued stress at this time is extremely dangerous. It may lead to a variety of disorders, including high blood pressure, ulcers, depression, insanity, and even death.

INDIVIDUAL AND SITUATIONAL VARIABILITY

Not all people respond to stress in the same way, nor do all situations engender the same degree of stress.

Personality Differences. These have been found to affect the likelihood of experiencing stress (Friedman and Rosenman, 1974). Two types of personality have been identified that are relevant to the issue of stress. *Type A personalities* are highly competitive, ambitious, and impatient. They have difficulty controlling their anger and often speak and act in a hurried fashion. Type A personalities are prone to stress-related illnesses such as frequent and severe heart attacks and strokes.

Type B personalities are people who are more relaxed, less aggressive, and less competitive. They have little of the free-floating anxiety that characterizes the type A personality and are much less at risk for stress-related diseases.

Though this analysis of personality types has been absorbed into the popular culture, other research suggests that it is too simplistic. Linking specific types of personality to stress-related illnesses ignores the importance of how people *interpret* the situation in which they find themselves (see, for example, Schacter and Singer, 1962).

Situational Differences. The social context also affects reactions to stress. Some situations produce less stress than others. Holmes and Rahe (1967) have devised a "social readjustment scale" that places forty-three different life events on scale of severity. The most severe in their scheme is the "death of a spouse" and the least severe is a "minor violation of the law," with intermediate values for events such as "pregnancy" and the "beginning or ending of school." Since stress is often cumulative, the higher a person's score, the greater is the probability that he or she will experience stress-related illnesses.

Critics have pointed out that this view, like Selye's, is too general. People differ in their interpretation of stressful events and how they deal with them. Understanding the nature of stress requires taking into account what kind of stress is involved, how the person perceives and assesses the stress, and how he or she copes with it.

Types of Family Stressors

There are common events within families that are likely to produce stress, or to act as *stressors*. Though there are different types of stressors, some situations may involve one or more of these types.

LOSS OF A FAMILY MEMBER

Families often lose a member either temporarily through hospitalization or permanently through death. The "empty nest" period is also an example of this form of stress.

ADDITION OF A FAMILY MEMBER

The birth of a baby is joyous but also stress-producing. Families have also increasingly taken on the burden of caring for elderly parents or other relatives. Both of these additions to the family place new demands on it and thus add an element of strain.

A DEMORALIZING EVENT

Actions that reduce the morale of the family and affect its affectional bonds are demoralizing and produce stress. Infidelity and substance abuse are examples of this type of stressor.

SUDDEN CHANGE

Any sudden change in an important aspect of the family's circumstance can cause stress. This is especially true of changes in income and social status. Job relocation and retirement are other examples of stress-inducing situations. Durkheim long ago pointed out that sudden wealth or fame, as well as sudden poverty or obscurity can produce *anomie*, a sense of being cut loose from one's moorings and having no guide to appropriate behavior; this experience is stressful for most people. It is the suddenness of the change rather than the nature of the change that constitutes this type of stressor.

CUMULATIVE STRESS

Families can be overwhelmed by a series of small and seemingly inconsequential stressors. Each one on its own may not have a major effect, but jointly they have a strong cumulative effect. For example, the cumulative effect of being pregnant, having a child experience a minor accident that requires medical attention, suffering a breakdown of the family car on the way to the pediatrician, and succeeding events can severely strain a family.

FAMILY CRISES

All families face *crises*, situations that seriously disrupt their normal routines so they cannot act in their usual manner. Not only are there different types of crises, but they seem to occur in a common sequence. Research has examined how families typically adapt to a crisis.

Types of Family Crises

Family crises can be categorized in a number of different ways. They can be described in terms of the type of stressor that produced them. Or they can be described in terms of their predictability.

DEVELOPMENTAL (NORMATIVE) CRISES

Some crises are quite predictable. They arise from understood events that are common to different stages in the family life cycle. Most families can anticipate that they will have one or more children, and that at some point these children will leave the home, producing an "empty nest." There are other predictable events in family life; they are normative, expected by society. These experiences can be anticipated in practically all families. Their predictability makes it possible to plan how to cope with them before they occur. For example, most couples arrange for the necessities of a new child before the child is born; they buy clothes and furniture, arrange the necessary space in their residence, alert those in their place of employment that they will not follow their normal routines, and engage in many other preparatory activities.

Dealing with developmental crises is part of living. Maturation brings with it changes in identity and social roles. Similarly, the structure and functioning of the family changes over time. The intersection of individual and family changes may produce a crisis, but one that is often predictable. The successful handling of these experiences is considered to be part of the normal process of maturation. Because of their normative character, these types of crises often do not carry any social stigma.

SITUATIONAL (NONNORMATIVE) CRISES

Some crises are not part of the normal cycle of family living, and therefore not easily predictable. They occur suddenly and abruptly, leaving little or no time for advance planning to deal with them. Some examples of this type of crisis include the death of a child, divorce, hospitalization, and unemployment. These crises are often catastrophic precisely because there is little time to prepare for them. In contrast to developmental crises, these situations often leave the family feeling helpless and out of control. The emotional impact is great.

The Trajectory of Family Crises

Though the reason for family crises vary, coping strategies follow a predictable trajectory. Three distinct stages have been found in the way family crises are handled.

STAGES OF A FAMILY CRISIS

Precipitating Event. Some event or experience, predictable or not, upsets the family's routine and produces a crisis. Initially the crisis might not even be recognized as such, and little adjustment may seem to be required. For example, it is common for first-time parents to underestimate the changes that a new infant will cause in their previous marital relationship and routines. Gradually these changes become increasingly obvious and the family adapts to the situation.

Period of Disorganization. A crisis disrupts a family's routines, but no new ones are established to compensate. Initially there is often a period of confusion about what needs to be done to deal with the crisis. Affectional bonds often become strained, and family routines are carried out with little commitment or enthusiasm. Anger and frustration are often the result.

Relationships outside of the family also frequently change. Isolation from friends and other relatives during the crisis is common. Such withdrawal tends to reduce the sources of help that may be useful in coping with the crisis.

At some point the crisis seems overwhelming and insoluble. The family is at a complete loss as to what to do.

Reorganization and Recovery. At this bottom point, things typically begin to improve. The severity of the problem forces the family to grope for ways out of the crisis. Either by accident or by thoughtful problem-solving, solutions are suggested and tried out. The family begins to reorganize itself, reestablishing necessary routines and relationships. Not all resolutions of crises are happy. Some solutions may mean the loss of a family member, through divorce for example. Other solutions may leave the family less well off than they were before. On the other hand, some crises lead to a family stronger for having successfully coped with the problem. In short, families can recover and reorganize from crises in different and successful ways.

Dealing with Family Crises

Many scholars have attempted to provide a general model to explain family crises and how they are handled. The initial theory that received widespread support was Hill's (1949) ABC-X model. This was later expanded by McCubbin and Patterson (1983) to the double ABCX model.

AN EARLY THEORY: HILL'S ABC-X MODEL

This model underpins the earlier discussion of the trajectory of family crises. There are four elements to this theory.

Stressor (A). Some stressor is necessary to cause a change in normal routines and to produce some degree of disorganization. This can come from any one of the types of stressors discussed earlier.

Resources (B). A family has resources that can be used to deal with the disruption caused by the stressor. Most families have two relevant resources for this purpose, integration and adaptability. The first refers to the family's unity and strength, as indicated by their bonds of affection for one another, their shared interests, and their economic interdependence. The latter involves the family's flexibility in solving problems, in being able to envision and carry out a variety of strategies.

The Family's Definition of the Stressor (C). As indicated earlier, individuals and families differ in their interpretation and assessment of the extent and severity of any stressor. This definition of the stressor will govern how the family deals with it and often is governed by the family's past experience with similar events.

The Actual Crisis (X). The final element in Hill's theory is the actual amount of disruption of the family that is introduced. The magnitude of the crisis depends on all of the preceding factors—the type of stressor (A), the available resources a family can bring to bear on it (B), and the family's interpretation of the stressor (C). Clearly, resourceful families with crisis experience are more likely to be able to maintain or reestablish quickly a semblance of their previous level of functioning in the face of stress.

A MORE SOPHISTICATED THEORY: THE DOUBLE ABCX MODEL

This model builds on the earlier Hill theory. It adds more realistic complexity to the crisis situation and available modes of coping. In essence it deals with the aftermath of the crisis (X) and the process of adaptation or nonadaptation to it (see Fig. 17.1).

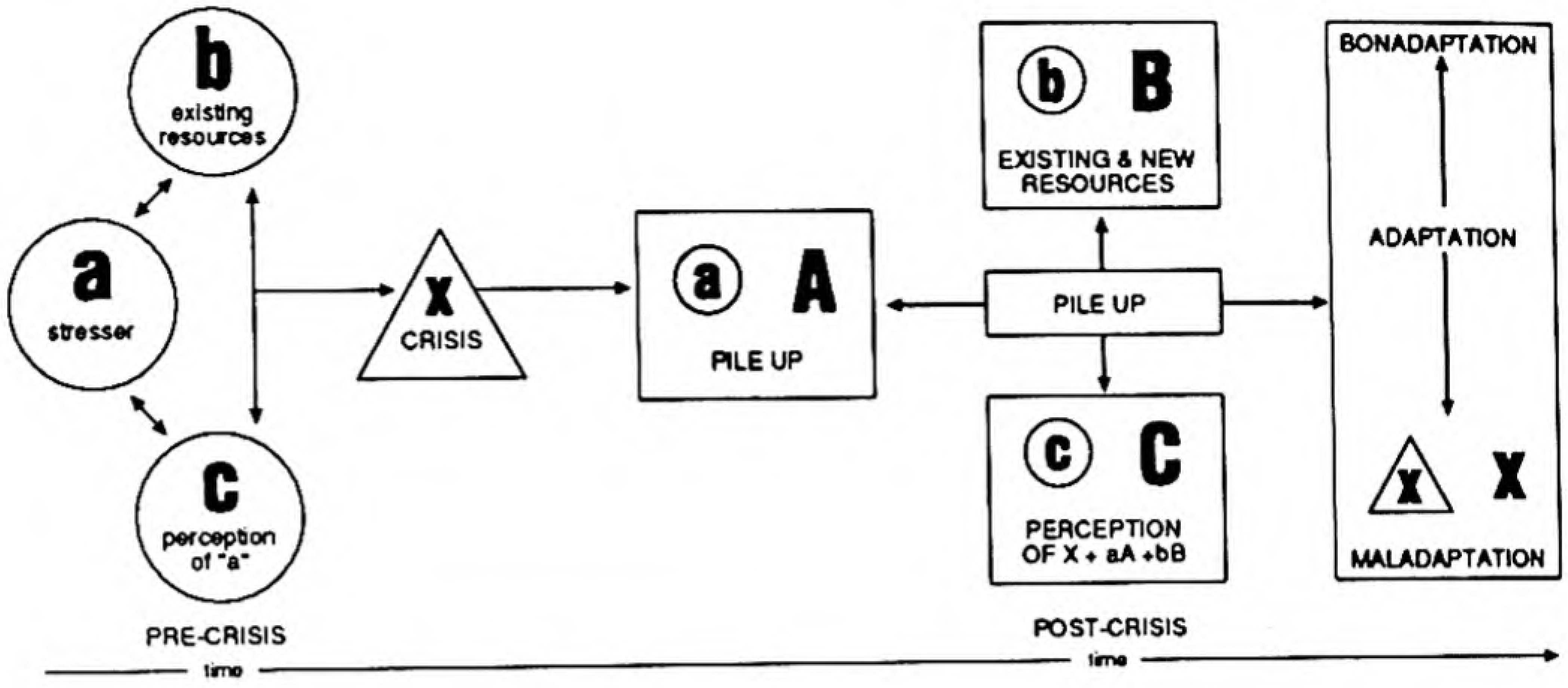

Fig. 17.1 The Double ABCX Model (Source: H.I. McCubbin and J.M. Patterson [1983:91]. Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications)

A Pileup of Demands (aA). This posits that families often face more than one stressor at the time of crisis, called cumulative stress. This aggregation of stress results from several factors. The hardships due to the disruption of routines often grow worse if the crisis continues for any length of time. Also, a developmental crisis may exist along with a situational crisis, and the legacy of earlier strains in family relationships may heighten the severity of the current strain. Finally, the consequences of efforts to cope with the crisis, and the inevitable ambiguity that surrounds crises and their possible solutions produce a more complicated situation than is envisioned in Hill's model.

Family Adaptive Resources (bB). These include not only existing resources but expanded resources. These latter resources consist of the ability to reallocate family roles and responsibilities to meet a new situation. For example, an older child might drop out of school to take a job when the main breadwinner of the family dies or becomes unemployed. But the most important expanded family resource is the ability to gain social support from friends, relatives, and even relevant professionals.

Family Definition and Meaning (cC). In this model, interpretation is more complicated because of the wider range of elements in the earlier two factors (aA and bB). Successful adaptation means getting a global and balanced view of both the nature of the stress and the resources available to deal with it. Chances of successful coping are increased if the crisis is defined as a challenge for the family with opportunities for growth, rather than as a problem and an annoyance.

Family Adaptation Balancing (xX). It is necessary to balance the resources available from individual family members, the family group, and the outside community of friends, relatives, and professionals. The emphasis in this part of the model is on establishing an appropriate balance between the demands of the family as a system and those of its individual members. For example, the need for children to adhere to parental direction needs to be balanced against the equally important need for adolescents to learn how to be autonomous, self-directing, and self-monitoring. A balance is also required between the demands of the family and those of the outside world, such as jobs. In the dual-income family, for example, balance must be attained between work role and family role needs.

This concept of balance between the family, its individual members, and the outside community is essential to the double ABCX model. When this balance, or *bonadaptation*, is achieved, it enables both the family and its members to achieve integrity and growth. The lack of such a balance in one or both types of relationships, *maladaptation*, may lead to the deterioration of the family and of the mental and physical health of its members.

GENERAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CRISIS RESOLUTION

Resolving family crises successfully is both an art and a science. Considerable research has been carried out to locate those factors that seem to be associated with effective crisis resolution. Briefly, they are as follows:

A Positive Outlook. In this way the family views a crisis as a challenge and thus avoids the destructive interpersonal recriminations and blame assignment that makes a crisis worse.

Spiritual Values. These have been found to increase family cohesion and provide the moral strength to deal with the stresses of life.

Support Groups. The help of others has long been known to play a positive role in assisting individuals and families deal with crises. Groups of family and friends are often essential to the coping process. Formally organized support groups have become increasingly useful in helping individuals and families deal with the problems they face. That is the basis of organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Al-Anon, a support group for families of alcoholics.

Personal Characteristics. The traits typically associated with effective crisis resolution are high self-esteem and adaptability. Those who are comfortable with themselves and confident about their abilities are in a better position to deal with stress. Similarly, flexibility and adaptability allow the fashioning of creative solutions to crises.

Open Communication and Interaction. Easy discussion among family members often leads them to understand and support each other. Without such communication, negative feelings remain under the surface; unresolved, they tend to poison the atmosphere of the family and reduce the effectiveness of attempts to deal with crises.

MARITAL STRENGTH

Coping successfully with crises often strengthens a marriage. It is time to examine and explore the meaning and source of marital strength.

Types of Marital Strength

Happiness, satisfaction, success, adjustment, and other terms tend to be used interchangeably to describe family strength. However, there are differences in these terms that reflect alternative ways of looking at what holds marriages together.

MARITAL SUCCESS

When success is used to describe marriages, the focus is often on the degree to which the expectations of society are being met. Families who are intact, have children, occupy an adequate residence, have a reasonable and steady income, exhibit at least a base level standard of living, and own one or more cars and color television sets are generally considered to have at least a minimally successful marriage. The strength of the marriage is judged on the basis of what might be called "performance outcomes," that is, conforming to the external trappings of society's definition of a good family.

Many families exhibit a number of these characteristics but are not considered to have strong or effective marriages by the family members themselves or by those who know them. Most marriages that end in divorce have practically all of these qualities up until the time the marriage dissolves. Consequently, other factors must be involved in defining marital effectiveness or strength.

MARITAL HAPPINESS AND SATISFACTION

In contrast to marital success, marital happiness and satisfaction depend on the personal views of family members. It is they, not others, who define the nature of their marriage. This difference in perspective explains why outsiders may take a negative view of a marriage while the participants are more positive about it; the reverse is also possible. This way of looking at the strength of a marriage is more psychological, while marital success reflects a sociological stance.

Happiness refers to a "snapshot" of the marriage at a specific point in time, while satisfaction involves a more reflective view over the course of the relationship. People can be satisfied with their marriage even though they are unhappy with it at a specific time. Similarly, they can be generally dissatisfied with their marriage but experience periods of happiness. The key is the personal perspective that family members adopt; they generally have their own goals and ideas about a good marriage, and they are happy or satisfied to the extent that these are met.

MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

Marriage requires a continual process of adjustment of the partners to each other and to the family as a system; there needs to be continual mid-course corrections. Each family member is a separate and unique individual. Each is constantly changing, and not always in the same direction or at the same rate as the others. At the same time, the social context in which family members find themselves does not remain static and each may respond differently to these changes in the social environment. For example, a husband and wife may take different views of the changing nature of gender roles described in several earlier chapters. Such systemwide changes mean that constant adjustments among family members is necessary if the family is to function reasonably well.

Adjustment doesn't happen at random. There are a number of *developmental tasks* (activities unique to a particular stage of transition in life) of family living that typically require the adjustment of marital partners. Clayton (1979) has illuminated eight such areas.

Marriage Sociability. This includes the range of social activities typical of married couples. These involve visiting with and entertaining friends as well as going out on social occasions either alone or with others. Couples need to learn how to engage in a range of social activities that both partners enjoy.

Marriage Companionship. Enjoying each other's company, sharing experiences, and doing things the other appreciates cement a marriage. Whatever else it is, marriage is primarily companionship.

Economic Affairs. Agreement needs to be reached on how family income will be spent, on which items will have priority, and which will be considered luxuries. The decision to be a two-income family also requires discussion and agreement.

Marital Power. Partners have to respect each other and accept one another's legitimate role in family decision making. Learning this mutuality is an important marital adjustment task.

Extra-Family Relationships. Others, outside the family, often have claims on the time, energy, and resources of the couple. Balancing these demands with those of the nuclear family of procreation is not always easy, but it is necessary.

Ideological Congruence. This refers to the necessity of couples sharing a similar, though not necessarily identical, philosophy of life. It is important that both partners have common ideas about what is right, good, and proper; they need to be more similar than different on basic values.

Marital Intimacy. Each person has to learn how to express affection for the other in ways the partner appreciates. Some people express affection publicly, while others prefer that it remain private. Ways of satisfying each other are part of the adjustment processes that lead to strong and effective marriages.

Interaction Tactics. These refer to the dynamics of the interpersonal relationship in marriage. The importance of cooperation between partners is stressed, as is the need to compromise and accommodate to differences. Agreement on the necessary division of family responsibilities is an important adjustment task. Even agreeing on appropriate ways to manage clean arguments and differences is necessary to a quality marriage.

None of the marital adjustment tasks listed above is new to the couple. They have all played a part in the dating and courtship relationship. However, they are even more central to marriage, in which the two partners share a joint life and space. Furthermore, the relationship between spouses is constantly evolving, making adjustment a continual necessity. Clayton has highlighted some of the most critical areas that require constant attention in marriage.

MARRIAGE SOLIDARITY

This term refers to the overall strength of the bonds within the family. This solidarity is a reflection and summary of all of the other perspectives of marital strength. The solid marriage is one in which the partners are meeting societal expectations and have made the necessary adjustments to married life. It is a marriage in which the partners are generally satisfied with their marriage and are more often happy than not.

Bases of Marital Strength

Strong or solid marriages do not occur automatically. They require constant attention, commitment, and hard work. Three kinds of factors contribute to such marriages.

POSITIVE REWARDS WITHIN MARRIAGE

Marriage contains a number of positive benefits to the partners. These rewards are intrinsic to marriage and contribute to partners' happiness and satisfaction with their relationship.

Social Participation. Activities as a couple lead to enjoyable experiences in most marriages. Spending an evening with other couples, attending a party, movie or concert, and a myriad of other social activities are the very heart of an enjoyable married life.

Interdependence. Partners help each other meet their important needs. Partners often depend on each other to accomplish many of the mundane routines of life. Who will take care of the laundry? Who will call friends to make an appointment for Saturday night? Who will take the car in to be serviced? Who will do the grocery shopping? In most marriages hundreds of daily tasks can be shared, making them easier than for those living alone who have the sole responsibility for these routine tasks.

The Sexual Relationship. This is one of the most satisfying features of many marriages. Most people find sex to be a satisfying and enjoyable experience. In marriage it can be an integral and frequent activity. A satisfying sexual relationship and a satisfying marital relationship go hand-in-hand. Because of the intimacy and subtlety of the emotions involved, the sexual relationship is affected by the overall quality of the marriage. With rare exceptions, good marriages have good sex and bad marriages have bad or no sex.

Conjugal Love. Sometimes called "married love," it is extremely satisfying to most people. While it lacks the emotional highs of romantic love, it also tends to avoid emotional lows. Tenderness, caring, and sharing are the bases of conjugal love. As a consequence, conjugal love deepens over time. This quieter type of emotional bond is perhaps the most satisfying aspect of marriage; it is often misunderstood by children who expect to see displays of romantic love they have watched in the movies and on television.

TRADITIONAL BARRIERS TO MARITAL DISSOLUTION

The key measure of marital success to the public is whether the marriage endures. Traditionally, there have been several factors in American society that have discouraged people from dissolving their marriage despite the difficulties they faced. In most cases these barriers are more permeable today; they are less likely to hold poor marriages together.

Social Pressure. There is often considerable social pressure to maintain a marriage, and the social stigma of divorce has served to keep many unsatisfactory marriages intact. Couples were encouraged to work out their difficulties, preferably in private, and keep their marriages together. This social pressure is considerably less prevalent today for several reasons. Personal happiness and satisfaction in marriage has become more important than simply meeting societal expectations. Also, the increase in social and geographical mobility in the United States has weakened community pressure as an effective force in the lives of most people.

Tough Divorce Laws. At one time, these were an important barrier. Unsatisfying marriages were often held together by the financial and legal complications of obtaining a divorce. Since 1970, when California became the first state to offer "no fault" divorce, most states have similarly eased their divorce procedures.

The Perceived Undesirability of the Single Life. This perception kept many unsatisfying marriages together. Those who remained or became single through divorce were often seen as unhappy, lonely, and undesirable. The general view was that marriage was a desirable state and singlehood was not. Many people avoided divorce because their chances of remarriage were lowered by the view that they were "damaged goods." Singlehood today, however, has a less negative connotation. Many people see its advantages, and it does not prevent divorce as it did previously.

Religious Beliefs. Religiosity tended to keep divorce rates low. Most religions frown upon divorce; the Roman Catholic Church fails to recognize its legitimacy by not permitting a divorced person to remarry. The religious belief that marriage is a sacrament from God that "no man can put asunder" is still part of the faith of a number of people. However, today this does not seem to be a predominant view.

Children. Children have been one of the primary barriers to divorce. It was not uncommon for people in unsatisfying marriages to be advised to stay together "for the sake of the children." In fact, historically, divorce rates have tended to peak at the beginning of marriages, before there were children, and after the children were grown. This is no longer the case. Children no longer seem to be a factor in keeping couples from divorcing. And there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that children are better off if parents who are unhappy divorce rather than keep a conflict-ridden marriage together.

Lack of Alternatives. The absence of options increased the pressure on people to stay in unsatisfying marriages. This was perhaps the primary barrier to divorce for women in previous years. Few women worked outside of the home and most had little if any means to support themselves and their children after divorce, other than notoriously inadequate and unreliable alimony and child support payments. Today many wives are in the labor force and many are in a position to support themselves and their children if their marriage dissolves. More women have confidence in their ability to take care of themselves and their children if that becomes necessary.

FACILITATIVE MECHANISMS

There are a number of mechanisms that serve to make marriages work better. Most of these are forms of adjustment between the partners to the requirements of married life.

Pair Expectation of Success. This is perhaps the primary key to an effective marriage. While practically all people enter marriage expecting it to succeed, not all have a realistic view of marriage and what is expected of them. Romantic fantasies about marriage contribute to a lack of understanding regarding the hard work, commitment, and continual adjustments that are necessary to make a marriage work. Expecting to succeed and committing oneself to the effort necessary to accomplish that goal plays a major role in effecting a solid and effective marriage. One of the arguments against a prenuptial agreement is the less than full commitment to a quality marriage that it implies.

Rapport-Building Devices. These are often useful in smoothing over difficult times. Conciliatory gestures, drawing on the past quality of the relationship, compliments, compromise, and accommodation are among the many ways a couple can reestablish the warm and affectionate feeling they once had. Conflict destroys rapport, the basis of an intimate relationship. If the quality of a marriage is to continue and be strong, that earlier rapport must be rebuilt.

Common Identity. A shared sense of identity derives from participation in an important joint activity: marriage and raising children. This common tie is forged through the struggles and accomplishments entailed in marriage and creating a family. Working together for common goals through good times and bad serves to bind people to one another. Drawing on this bond can help couples during the difficult times that all marriages face.

Empathy and Understanding. These are important mechanisms in marriage. They allow partners to see the situation through the other's eyes. Without understanding the perspective of the other, there is little likelihood that differences can be satisfactorily resolved. It is important, however, that empathy be practiced by both partners. If only one partner is empathic, he or she will end up bearing the entire burden of marital adjustment; this situation is not conducive to the mutuality required in effective marriages.

Marital strength depends today more on the positive rewards people derive from marriage and the use of mechanisms to deal with difficult times than on traditional social and legal pressures of the past. This is a positive statement about the nature of contemporary marriage; its quality depends on the partners more than on society.

Every family faces stress that may disrupt its routines and cause a crisis. The major general theory of stress, by Hans Selye, focuses on the body's physiological reaction; recent research suggests that there is individual and situational variability in response to stress. Moreover, there are different types of stressors. Sometimes they accumulate, increasing the difficulties for families.

Developmental crises such as the birth of a child are predictable features of family life; situational crises such as the death of a child are often abrupt and unpredictable, leaving little opportunity for advance planning. Family crises seem to follow a typical course and several models have been developed to focus on the way in which families adapt or fail to adapt to crises. Crises are more likely to be dealt with adequately when people have a positive outlook, strong spiritual values, and high self-esteem. They must also be flexible, use support groups, and communicate and interact openly with other family members in an attempt to resolve a crisis.

Marital strength is indexed in a number of ways. Success refers to meeting societal expectations for marriage. Happiness and satisfaction are, respectively, short-term and long-term personal views of the adequacy of the marriage. Marital adjustment occurs over a number of broad areas of *marital functioning including sociability, companionship and modes of intimacy, economic aspects, power and interpersonal tactics, common outlook on life, and relationships outside of the family. Solid marriages are those which have met societal expectations, made the necessary adjustments, and in which the partners are generally satisfied and happy.*

Strong and effective marriages are held together by the positive rewards that marriage offers. Making marriage work requires specific facilitative mechanisms. Less important today are traditional barriers to divorce that kept people in unsatisfying marriages. Most of these barriers are no longer effective in inducing people to remain in bad marriages. The positive benefits of marriage and the developing facilitative mechanisms of adjustment are the key elements in quality marriages today.

18

Family Abuse and Violence

Violence in the family has become an important social issue in the United States today. There are many myths surrounding domestic abuse and violence. Violence in the family takes a number of different forms and seems to occur more frequently in certain social and family contexts. This chapter considers these issues and the variety of modes of dealing with the problem of family abuse and violence.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Types of Violence in the Family

Abuse in the family takes a variety of forms. A brief description of the different types is offered here as an introduction to the range of victims involved in family violence.

SPOUSE ABUSE

Violence of one marital partner toward another constitutes spouse abuse. The violence may be physical, mental or even sexual. Marital violence occurs at the hands of both marital partners, and each is discussed separately.

CHILD ABUSE

Children can also be abused physically, mentally, and sexually. While children also abuse each other, child abuse overwhelmingly occurs at the hands of parents or surrogate parents. It has emerged as a national problem.

PARENT OR ELDER ABUSE

The abuse of the elderly by their children, relatives or caretakers is a relatively new social problem. Maltreatment and neglect, as well as physical violence constitutes elder abuse.

Common Myths About Family Violence

The issue of family violence has become a staple of the mass media. Almost daily the newspapers, radio or television report on one or more cases of child or spouse abuse. The national attention domestic violence has received has increased its prominence in the public mind. However, there is still considerable misinformation about the nature of family abuse. A good deal of "common sense" understanding of this important social problem consists of myths, which limit society's ability to deal with the issue. Gelles and Cornell (1985) have identified a number of these myths and attempted to provide more relevant factual information.

MYTH: FAMILY VIOLENCE IS RARE

Unfortunately, this is untrue. Close to two million children are abused and neglected yearly. Almost the same number of spouses severely attack their marital partner, and over two and one-half million parents are also abused. Clearly family violence has become a major social problem in the United States.

MYTH: FAMILY VIOLENCE IS A RESULT OF MENTAL ILLNESS

If this were true, it would be easy to dismiss abuse in the family as an aberration, an untypical form of behavior by sick people. However, all available research demonstrates that most of the perpetrators of family violence are *not* mentally ill. They are, by and large, "normal" people engaging in violent acts.

MYTH: THE PRIMARY CAUSES ARE ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE

As with mental illness, the acceptance of this statement would localize the problem with deviants. While it is certainly true that a number of abusers are alcoholics or drug abusers, the relationship between these sets of behaviors is not direct. Alcohol and drug abuse are occasionally part of an abusive relationship; however, there is insufficient evidence at this point to assert that they *cause* abuse.

MYTH: FAMILY VIOLENCE IS STRICTLY A LOWER-CLASS PHENOMENON

While there is more abuse reported in lower-class families, it is not restricted to that population. Violence, unfortunately, can be found in families in all social strata.

MYTH: SINCE FAMILY VIOLENCE OCCURS IN ALL GROUPS, SOCIAL FACTORS DO NOT PLAY A ROLE

While the first part of the statement is accurate, the second is not. The importance of social factors in creating the context for abuse will be detailed later in this chapter.

MYTH: ABUSED CHILDREN BECOME ABUSIVE ADULTS

While partly true, this myth overstates the facts. Children who have been abused are in fact *more likely* to become abusers as adults. However, the relationship between being abused and abusing others is neither automatic nor inevitable.

MYTH: BATTERED WIVES ENJOY BEING ABUSED; OTHERWISE THEY WOULD LEAVE

The truth is that no one enjoys being abused. Those battered wives who remain in abusive relationships, and many do not, do so because of a variety of factors including fear, guilt, shame, or economic dependence.

MYTH: FAMILY VIOLENCE AND LOVE CANNOT GO TOGETHER

Surprising as it may seem, there is no evidence to support this claim. Abusers and abused often report that they love one another. Abuse is behavior that gets out of hand, despite feelings of love. And the abused often place the pain inflicted on them in the context of the total family relationship.

MYTH: MEN ARE MORE FREQUENT AND DEADLY ABUSERS

In point of fact, wives assault their husbands about as frequently as husbands assault their wives. While husbands are generally stronger than their wives and are thus capable of inflicting more damage, wives are more likely to use some form of weapon (frequently a kitchen knife). As a consequence, it is estimated that wives and husbands are about equally likely to kill each other in domestic disputes (Robertson, 1987:351).

CHILD ABUSE

Most people consider child abuse a horrible form of behavior. Helpless children are at the mercy of those charged with their care; yet it is usually a parent or "caretaker" who abuses the child. Such abuse is the clearest expression of parental rejection a child can experience. As a measure of interest in this issue, only about ten percent of Americans believed child abuse to be a serious problem in the 1970s; today, 90 percent do. In actuality, however, one important study (Straus and Gelles, 1986) has shown a

	Rates per 1,000 Children Ages 3–17	
Types of Violence	**1975**	**1985**
Minor Acts of Violence		
1. Threw Something	54	27
2. Pushed, Grabbed, Shoved	318	307
3. Slapped or Spanked	582	549
Severe Acts of Violence		
4. Kicked, Hit, Hit with Fist	32	13
5. Hit, Tried to Hit with Object	134	97
6. Beat Up	13	6
7. Threatened with Gun or Knife	1	2
8. Used Gun or Knife	1	2
Indexes of Violence		
Overall Violence (1–8)	630	620
Severe Violence (4–8)	140	107
Very Severe Violence (4, 6, 8)	36	19

Table 18.1 Comparison of Parent-to-Child Violence Rates, 1975 and 1985

decrease in the reported frequency of child abuse between 1975 and 1985 (see Table 18.1). It is important to note, though, that it is not clear whether the decrease is due to a change in actual behavior or a change in what is being reported.

Types of Child Abuse

There are several ways in which children are abused. Despite the difference in form, each type inflicts considerable and often long-term damage.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: THE "BATTERED CHILD" SYNDROME

The most common form of child abuse is likely to be the physical battering of a child that results in injury and occasionally death. While many parents use some measure of violence in disciplining their children, most of it consists of slapping or spanking. However, children are also hit with fists or hard objects, kicked, bitten, and burned or scalded; they are also at times threatened with a knife or gun, and sometimes become victims of weapons.

In about half the cases of battered children, the abuse comes at the hands of men. Despite this apparent equal battering of children by men and women, most investigators believe that men are more violent toward children. This conclusion is based on an analogy with the auto safety records of the elderly.

While the elderly have a lower auto accident rate than the young, they also drive fewer miles. If the auto accident rates of the different age groups are examined on the basis of miles driven, the elderly have the worst driving record. Similarly, since women have significantly more frequent contact with and responsibility for children, they have more opportunity to perpetrate violence against children. Since the numerical frequency of child abuse is about the same for men and women, this is taken to signify a greater violence *rate* for men.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND INCEST

Sexual abuse of children has received prominent attention recently in the mass media. Many adults, including day-care workers, clergymen, parents, stepparents, and live-in lovers, have been charged and convicted of inducing or forcing children and adolescents to engage in a variety of sexual acts.

Child Sexual Abuse. This rarely occurs at the hands of a stranger. Overwhelmingly abusers are acquaintances or intimates of the victim. They are people with whom the child has developed a close, trusting relationship which is then violated. In cases of abuse by nonfamily members, boys are more likely to be the victim than girls.

Incest. This refers to a sexual relationship between persons who are prohibited because of their degree of kinship and is the most common form of sexual abuse. In contrast to nonfamilial sexual abuse, incest is overwhelmingly likely to occur between fathers (biological or not) and daughters. Homosexual abuse of boys by fathers (biological or not) is considerably less common, though relatively unstudied. Reports of sexual abuse by mothers are rare. An incestuous relationship typically begins when the girl is between the ages of six and eleven, and lasts on the average for about two years. Girls victimized by their stepfathers are likely to suffer the abuse for longer periods of time and also to be violated by friends of their stepfathers.

Incest is rarely about satisfying sexual need. It is a way of exerting control, expressing hostility, creating dependence, or finding a measure of emotional satisfaction. While physical force is occasionally used, more frequently incest involves threats, bribery, trickery, or intimidation. The fact that the offender is the parent often leads the victim to be reluctant to report the incest. Consequently, victims are often unable to get help to extricate themselves from the situation. Paradoxically, they often become intensely loyal to the victimizing parent, fearing his removal from the home and its resultant effect on the overall functioning of the family.

The *consequences* of incest are long-lasting. Since it represents a betrayal, incest often leads victims to be unable to trust in other close relationships. Sexually abused children often have poor self-images that persist into adulthood, perhaps as a result of blaming themselves for the incest. Both as children and later as adults, they often display feelings of depression and helplessness. Later on they tend to have difficulty with other sexual relationships. These consequences are magnified and worsened if the victims do not receive some form of therapeutic treatment.

Preventing incest depends on family members being alert to possible signs of such abuse. Complaints of pain or itching in the genital area or evidence of venereal disease may suggest sexual abuse. Withdrawal from activities or constant despondency may also point to such abuse. A child who is unwilling to participate in physical activities, frequently engages in destructive or delinquent behavior or has poor relationships with peers may also be responding to sexual abuse. Physically or psychologically absent mothers combined with overbearing fathers have been viewed as an especially potent mixture that can lead to incest. Teaching children never to have secret sexual agreements with anyone, including family members, is another way of alerting children—and others—to this potential problem. In short, frank discussion within the family, appropriate to the child's maturity, is an important preventive measure available to all families.

CHILD NEGLECT

Though not as dramatic as physical or sexual abuse, neglect is also of growing concern today. Neglect refers to the failure of parents or caretakers to meet children's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, emotional support, medical attention, and supervision. Failing to provide for these needs often leads to underdeveloped children who don't thrive as do children who are well cared for. The signs of physical neglect include malnutrition, lack of proper clothing, and health problems such as uncorrected vision or bad teeth.

Neglect involves willful acts of omission. The parents simply and intentionally do not provide for the normal needs of developing children. These include the need for emotional support. Maturing children need to feel secure, loved, and wanted. Lack of interest in the child's needs or interests and failing to help build a positive self-image for the child are acts of neglect and emotional abuse.

Factors Leading to Child Abuse

Though some parents abuse their children because they themselves are mentally disturbed, it is becoming increasingly clear that the social context of the family is a primary source of child abuse. A number of family factors contribute to the abuse of children.

DEMANDING CHILDREN

Children who are ill, physically disabled, or hyperactive, and those who suffer from a variety of emotional problems put a severe strain on the family, especially on parents. They are likely to tax the emotional and physical energies of their mothers and fathers, who, in some cases, may abuse them. The difficult demands these children make of parents help to explain child abuse, but do not justify it.

UNREALISTIC PARENTAL ROLE EXPECTATIONS

Young parents and those who become parents "prematurely" are likely to have less realistic expectations of what is required to be a parent. The arrival of a baby is to some extent a shock, one that upsets their earlier routines and marital relationship. They are unable or unwilling to reorganize their lives and to reorient their priorities in ways that children require. The routine demands of parenthood produce anger and resentment that may be vented through violence against the child.

INADEQUATE LEARNING OF THE CARETAKER ROLE

Some parents never learn how to take care of children properly. They have difficulty distinguishing between ways of disciplining children and abusing them. These parents have not learned how to distract a child from unacceptable behavior or to set clear, consistent, and appropriate limits in advance. Inadequate parenting skills are more common among teenagers who have children, particularly single mothers.

A number of parents were themselves abused as children and see violence as a typical part of family life. Tragically, child abuse tends to be handed down through families and to continue over generations.

STRESS

The amount of stress in the lives of parents is often connected with violence in the family. Difficult economic times result in increasing levels of unemployment, underemployment or lack of career advancement. These conditions put adults under tremendous strain, which can become unbearable and lead to violence against others, including family members. The changing nature of gender relations has also led to power struggles in a number of families that result in increased violence.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Alcoholism and other substance abuse by the parent or caretaker is linked to child abuse in a large number of cases. Drug dependency colors all other activities; caring for children is secondary and to the extent that children interfere with meeting the drug need, they are pushed aside. Drug dependent individuals also have low frustration tolerance when their needs are not being met. It is not unusual for them to react violently to the typical activities of children.

Reporting Child Abuse

Investigators and those dealing with child abuse believe that a lack of systematic reporting leads to an underestimation of the problem. Primary responsibility for dealing with child abuse rests with state and local authorities. All fifty states, plus American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have laws about reporting child abuse. In general these laws *require* public caretakers such as child-care workers, health and social service professionals, and teachers to report suspected cases of child abuse. The laws often define the types of conditions that need to be reported; they also provide immunity against legal action for mistaken, nonmalicious reports. Any person may report cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. In general, laws offer immunity against legal action for such reports as long as they are made in good faith.

A report of suspected abuse will generally result in a visit from a child protective service worker, who will attempt to assess whether the child is in immediate danger and requires removal from the home. Court action is generally required for this drastic step. If removal from the home is not necessary, the worker typically offers assistance to the family through a treatment program, if possible. The child protective services in most large cities are understaffed and overburdened. As a consequence, they are occasionally not able to intercede early enough in situations that later lead to tragedy.

SPOUSE ABUSE

Physical violence between marital partners is not new. Recently it has become sufficiently visible and frequent to be labeled a social problem. A national survey (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980) found that in 1975 about twenty-eight percent of all couples, both marital and cohabiting, experienced some form of spouse abuse during the course of their relationship. A similar survey (Straus and Gelles, 1986) found a slight decrease in marital violence. However, there is some doubt about whether there actually was a decrease or whether it was due to differences in the form of the research or the reluctance of families to report such violence.

Characteristics

SOCIAL CLASS

Spouse abuse occurs in all social classes. However, more abuse is reported in working-class families, in part because middle-class families have more privacy and greater ability to conceal such acts. Middle-class families also have a wider range of professional help available, which reduces the likelihood that the violence will come to the attention of the police.

GENDER

Despite popular opinion, husbands and wives are about equally likely to inflict violence on their partner (Robertson, 1987:351). Often, this is a result of mutual violence; it has long been known that violence begets violence, and spouse abuse is apparently no exception to this general rule. It also seems that wives use or threaten to use a weapon more frequently than husbands. This difference probably results from wives' attempt to compensate for the generally greater physical strength of their husbands.

Battered Wives

INCIDENCE

Approximately two million women each year experience abuse at least once at the hands of their husbands or ex-husbands. Furthermore, about one-third of these women will be subject to abuse again within six months of the initial incident. About 3,000 women are beaten to death each year. Clearly, wife-battering is a widespread and continual problem in the American family.

THREE-PHASE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Increasingly, investigators and counselors are finding that wife battering follows a specific three-phase pattern. First, a minor difficulty arises that causes tension to build up over a period of time. Second, the escalating problem leads to a major violent eruption. Third, the husband begs forgiveness for the violence, swearing that it will never happen again; the wife wishes to believe her husband's often genuine contrition and his promise that the violence will not recur. Frequently, however, if nothing is done to alleviate the underlying cause of the violence, it will erupt again with a repetition of the three-phase cycle, only with increasing severity.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOME

Various characteristics of the home seem to increase the likelihood of wife battering. It tends to occur where:

The husband is a manual worker if employed, or is unemployed or employed part-time, and the family income is less than $6,000.

Both husband and wife feel economically insecure and the wife is dissatisfied with the family's standard of living.

There are at least two children in the home.

Both husband and wife come from families in which the father abused the mother.

The marriage is less than ten years old, the couple is nonwhite, and both spouses are younger than thirty years old.

There is more than the average amount of marital conflict, and the amount of family and individual stress is high.

One marital partner completely dominates family decisions, and both are verbally aggressive toward one another.

Both are frequently drunk, even if they are not technically alcoholics.

The family has not resided in the community for more than two years, does not participate in organized religion, and the wife is a full-time homemaker.

THE INTERACTIONAL CONTEXT OF WIFE ABUSE

In addition to the characteristics of the home that increase the risk for wife abuse, there are certain key features of the interactional relationship between spouses that are conducive to wife battering (Goldberg, 1983):

A Traditional, Dependent Woman. A woman who feels helpless and needs constant reassurance may drive her husband to isolate himself from her emotionally. She then demands more, feeling rejected, while he reports feeling "smothered."

A Couple that Cannot Fight Fairly. They have not developed skills at resolving conflict in nondestructive ways. They are unable to express their anger or disappointment openly and constructively. She nags and grows irritable; he withdraws, criticizes, and increases attempts to control her.

A Relationship that Has Become Boring. This is a problem when neither the husband nor the wife has the skills to reinvigorate it. The couple clings to each other while looking elsewhere for the excitement they wish but do not find in their marriage.

A Dependent and Insecure Couple. This refers to couples whose needs force them to rely on each other come to resent each other as obstacles to freedom and personal growth.

A Couple Who Resent but Are Afraid to Change Facets of Their Partner. Either through fear of being rebuffed by attempts at change or by the result of the change, a couple may continue in an unhappy marriage. Partners may even block each other from change and growth, creating a "no win" situation.

A Cycle of Conflict. The same basic issues are fought over again and again. With each new phase in the cycle, the level of frustration and rage increases.

A Husband Who Wants Things from the Marriage, but Is Unable to Ask for Them. Paradoxically, such a husband resents his wife's inability to read his mind and know what his needs are even if he does not express them.

A Wife Who Wants Autonomy and Power. She increases tension if she does not make this clear. She then blames her husband for exercising power and controlling her.

Different Perceptions of Each Other's Basic Personality. This can create a serious problem for the relationship. For example, a husband views his wife as an irrational child who cannot be satisfied and a wife views her husband as an insensitive, cold machine. These two perceptions feed into each other and create a vicious and escalating cycle of destructive behavior.

A Wife Who Cannot Articulate What She Does Not Like in the Marriage. Her nonspecific complaints irritate her husband but make him feel guilty. Yet he is helpless to deal with complaints that are too general.

A Marriage with Excessively High Initial Expectations. The inability of most couples to meet these expectations leads to feelings of resentment and disillusionment.

MARITAL RAPE

Only recently has it been recognized that marital rape exists. Most states have followed the lead of Oregon which established a law making it a crime for husbands or cohabitational partners to force their wives to have sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual activity. Though many people believe that marital rape is less traumatic than rape by a stranger, the limited research in this area does not support that view. The pain of betrayal and disillusionment is extremely difficult for victims of marital rape.

It has been estimated that approximately fourteen percent of all wives will be victims of marital rape during their marriage. Often marital rape is part of a sequence of wife battering, suggesting that like other forms of rape, marital rape is less an act of sexuality than one of violence and power assertion. It tends to occur in marriages in which there are frequent and continuing disagreements over alcoholism, children, drug usage, finances, friends or marital violence.

While few wives report marital rape, when they do the conviction rate is very high. Approximately eighty-five percent of husbands accused of marital rape are convicted, compared to about four percent of strangers charged with rape. Women subjected to marital rape have been encouraged to come forth and use the newly-instituted laws to protect themselves against this form of abuse.

WHY MANY WIVES REMAIN IN ABUSIVE MARRIAGES

Wives do not enjoy being battered, and they do not cooperate in their abuse. Yet some wives remain in such devastating circumstances. Why should this be?

Fear. Most wives who stay in abusive relationships fear that reporting the abuse or leaving their husbands would result in even greater violence, including being murdered. Recent cases of husbands and live-in lovers killing their wives despite restraining orders are a powerful reminder of the dangers involved.

Cultural Tradition. Many wives have been taught to accept the notion that it is the husband's right to exert his control over her through physical means. This has been handed down through English common law, and still holds sway in many families in the United States.

Childhood Experience of Abuse. Seeing violence in their family while growing up may lead a wife to expect physical violence as a typical part of family life. Whether she was abused as a child or saw one parent abuse the other, she may believe that battering comes with the family.

Love. Surprisingly, love is a strange phenomenon and battered wives often love their husbands. They see the violence as only one part of their marital relationship, one that they have to put up with to enjoy the rest of it.

Low Self-Esteem. This often leads women to blame themselves for the violence perpetrated against them. Additionally they may think so little of themselves that they believe their value depends on having a husband, despite what he does to them.

Dependency. This is a powerful reason why battered wives remain in abusive relationships. Wives who have little education or work skills believe that there are few alternatives to the marriage, however difficult the relationship.

Battered Husbands

National surveys have indicated that husbands and wives are about equally likely to physically abuse one another. Despite the approximately equal frequency, however, abuse of husbands by wives is less likely to be reported than the abuse of wives. This is probably due to several factors. Men are typically less likely than women to admit to problems. Further, it is seen as especially demeaning in American society for a man to admit that his wife has battered him.

The lower frequency of reports of husband battering has led to less research and analysis of its causes and consequences. It is presumed that this form of marital violence is a consequence of ineffective communication between spouses, and feelings of frustration by wives due to traditional power differences in many American families. Many investigators tend to interpret husband battering as the response of wives to abuse at the hands of their typically more physically powerful husbands. One investigator (Turner, 1980), however, suggests that husband abuse is usually inflicted by physically superior wives over handicapped, sick, older or smaller husbands.

Social Factors Contributing to Marital Violence

A number of social factors have been identified as contributing to violence in the American family. Though there is no one-to-one correspondence between the existence of these factors and marital violence, each singly and all in combination create a social context in which marital violence is more likely to occur.

TRADITIONAL PATRIARCHAL RIGHTS

Rights are defined by the legal system. The American legal system owes its heritage to English common law in which husbands had authority over their wives, and could enforce that authority through physical means. Some husbands have used that traditional authority to batter their wives, and some wives have responded by fighting back. A patriarchal hierarchy in the family, thus, contributes in some measure to the likelihood of marital violence.

ECONOMIC STRAIN

People often lash out in frustration against those they believe responsible for their pain. When those inflicting pain are either unidentifiable or too powerful, violence is often redirected to those less powerful and under the control of the person in pain. Economic strain is one of those social conditions whose causes are not always clear. Even when individuals can be identified as producing such strain, such as bosses or Congress, they are often too powerful to retaliate against. Family members are more handy and safer targets for pent-up frustrations.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF VIOLENCE

All investigators agree that those who were themselves the victims of family violence or witnessed it in their nuclear family of orientation are more likely to commit violence themselves. This intergenerational vicious cycle is self-perpetuating.

INADEQUATE SOCIAL AND PERSONAL CONTROL MECHANISMS

The lack of adequate mechanisms within society to help resolve differences without violence contribute to abuse in the family. Educational and social service systems that help families develop interpersonal skills to solve problems without resorting to violence are less developed in the United States than in some other countries. As a consequence, not enough people develop the skills or personal control mechanisms to deal with difficulties and stress in constructive ways.

Dealing with Marital Violence

POLICE INTERVENTION

Recently police intervention in domestic disputes has increased. Historically, police were reluctant to get involved and often advised the spouses to "try to work out their problems on their own." More and more states now define spouse abuse as a form of assault and battery, to be treated no differently than if it occurred between two unrelated individuals. There is a growing body of evidence to show that quick intervention into family violence and arresting the perpetrator results in fewer repeat acts of abuse. This change in police perception and tactics is in large part due to the political pressure mounted by women's groups around the United States.

Women are now able to get help from the courts against abusive husbands. Courts can provide an "order of protection" that is intended to keep abusive husbands away from his wife and children. Violation of an order of protection will permit the wife to call upon the police to immediately arrest the man. Unfortunately this is not an iron-clad protection against determined abusers, and recently a number of women with such orders have been murdered by their husbands or boyfriends. Still, the greater involvement of the various elements of the criminal justice system into domestic violence has been seen a positive development by most people. In addition, more and more judges are requiring mandatory rehabilitation programs for offenders.

SUPPORT AND TREATMENT

In recent years, an increasing number of support groups and treatment programs for victims of spouse abuse have been established. Temporary shelters have become available since the 1970s to wives and their children who seek to leave an abusive husband either for a short while or in order to start a new life. Treatment and counseling programs have also increased both for those leaving an abusive family and those trying to hold it together. Unfortunately, the level of funding required for the effectiveness of these programs is often less than what is needed.

ELDER ABUSE

The newest concern about violence in the family is the abuse of the elderly. It is increasingly evident that many aged individuals suffer abuse and neglect at the hands of their adult children or caretakers. Though accurate statistics are difficult, it has been estimated that between 500,000 and 2.5 million elderly people are subject to neglect or abuse each year, though less than ten percent of these cases come to the attention of the appropriate authorities. Research on the causes and consequences of elder abuse is rather limited at this time, though the number of relevant studies has been increasing recently and seems likely to continue. More definitive information on elder abuse should be available soon.

Parallels to Child Abuse

In many respects elder abuse is similar to child abuse. It is inflicted on relatively helpless individuals by those responsible for their care. Dependent and frail elderly individuals often require continual care that is both physically and emotionally demanding. This increases stress on the child or caregiver who may respond with neglect or abuse.

Recently, a phenomenon called "granny dumping" has increased. Like "baby dumping" of unwanted newborns, granny dumping is the result of an inability or lack of interest in taking care of an elderly parent or grandparent. The elderly person is usually taken to a public location such as a hospital, clinic, train station or movie house and left there for the authorities to find.

The Social Context

Most abused elders are women. This is largely because women live longer than men and are likely to require dependent care in their senior years. Elder abusers also tend to be women; in the main, this is a consequence of the fact that women are more likely to be caretakers of the elderly than are men.

Care of the elderly often comes at a difficult time in the life cycle of the family. Frequently adults must deal both with the demands of their own adolescent children and their aging parent(s). These adults have been called the "sandwich generation," squeezed between these two sets of difficult and often conflicting demands. These responsibilities may drain the family's economic and emotional resources, and limit the career or advancement opportunities of the primary caretaker. These factors may also cause stress within the family between spouses and further increase the pressure on the person responsible for providing care, often the wife/daughter. The resulting stress leads some individuals to abuse or neglect the elderly.

Dealing with Elder Abuse

Obviously attempts to relieve the pressure on the caregiver is essential if elder abuse is to be eliminated or reduced. Concrete help is likely to be the most effective. This aid could involve social agencies delivering necessary services such as shopping, taking the elderly person for necessary medical appointment, providing companionship to the elderly person, and so forth. This would also reduce the physical, social, and emotional demands on the caregiver. Educating the caregiver about the normal process of aging, and what is and is not possible on the part of the elderly, can also be of help. Counseling and therapy for both abusers and abused is especially necessary.

COMMON FEATURES OF ABUSIVE FAMILIES

Whatever the form of the abuse, investigators such as Finkelhor (1981) have noticed that abusive families seem to have a number of common features.

Abuse Depends on Power Differences

Whether it is sexual abuse, physical violence, or neglect, abuse is an exercise of power. The strongest victimize the weakest. Relationships with the widest power differential have the greatest potential for abuse.

Abuse Results from Perceived Loss of Power

The most deadly mix producing family violence occurs when the strong perceive that they are losing some degree of control or power. Often men batter wives who are beginning to assert themselves and establish their own autonomy. Similarly, it has been noted that incest often is perpetrated by men who feel they are losing control over their wives, and seek to regain a sense of power over their more helpless daughters.

Victims of Abuse Experience Common Feelings as a Result of Abuse

The abused often tend to blame themselves for the abuse. They accept the view that they have provoked the abuse. The elderly come to believe they are unloved and a burden, abused children that they are bad and ungovernable, spouses that they are too demanding or insufficiently supportive. They suffer from feelings of guilt and a consequent lowering of their self-esteem. The victims of abuse often feel humiliated and embarrassed, which explains the underreporting of such incidents.

Abusive Families Experience Similar Social Contexts

Similar social and family conditions seem to provide the context for abuse, whatever form it takes. Abusive families are likely to experience stress due to unemployment or underemployment, changing power relations among family members, and prior involvement in family violence.

Various Forms of Abuse Share a Similar Social History

Initially, the frequency of practically all forms of family abuse was underestimated. Early analysis of family abuse stressed individual problems as the cause, whether it was alcohol abuse or mental disorder. There was a tendency to blame both the abused and the abuser almost equally; it was assumed that abuse was not only perpetrated, it was provoked.

Today there is more agreement that family violence is not primarily a case of individual problems. Abuse is better explained in terms of the social conditions of families and in the lack of adequate interpersonal skills to deal with inevitable difficulties. It has become increasingly clear that by and large victims are not the provokers of violence. There has been a change in the focus of research in family violence from the characteristics of the individual to the social context.

Family violence has become a growing and important social issue in contemporary American society. Whatever its form—spouse abuse, child abuse, or elder abuse—there are certain myths about the nature of family violence, what causes it, who engages in it, and where it may be found. Family violence is neither rare nor caused primarily by alcoholism, drug abuse, or mental illness. Social factors play a key role in creating the context of family violence. While abuse is reported more frequently in lower-class families, it is not limited to members of that class, nor is it exclusively perpetrated by men against women.

Children are abused through battering, sexual fondling and intercourse, and neglect. Men are more likely to commit incest and to batter children. The effects of child abuse are long-lasting and survivors often require counseling or some other form of therapy. Demanding children, unrealistic expectations, inadequate preparation for the parental role, stress, and substance abuse are among the major factors leading to child abuse or neglect.

Spouse abuse occurs in over one-quarter of all marriages at one time or another. Approximately two million wives are battered each year, about one-third of those will experience abuse again, and about fourteen percent will experience marital rape. Without attention to the underlying causes of a cycle of violence, it is likely to recur with increasing severity. There are common features to families in which wives are battered, related to composition, class background, and earlier experiences. Abused wives who stay in such relationships do so out of fear, habit, cultural tradition, low self-esteem or a dependency which limits their options. Marital violence occurs more frequently in situations which include a traditional patriarchal hierarchy, economic strain, childhood experience of family violence, and inadequate personal and social controls. Spouse abuse is increasingly treated by police as a crime, and court-mandated rehabilitation programs for offenders have become more common.

Elder abuse has some clear parallels to the abuse of helpless children. It is more common among women, both as victims and as perpetrators; and is often a result of increasing stress on caregivers. Concrete help in meeting the needs of the elderly through a variety of social services is one way of relieving the pressure on caregivers and, hence, reducing the likelihood of elder abuse or neglect.

Family abuse thrives on power differences and perceptions of helplessness. Victims of abuse share similar consequences as abusive families share similar characteristics. Abuse was initially treated as a rare event, a manifestation of substance abuse or mental illness; today its social roots are clearer.

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Family Dissolution: Divorce

All marriages end, and the most common form of marital dissolution today is divorce. The statistical trends in divorce in the United States and elsewhere show that social factors both influence divorce rates and underpin many of the reasons for divorce. Divorce is actually a set of social processes and has consequences both for the families involved and for society.

FORMS OF MARITAL DISSOLUTION

All marriages end at some point. Differences appear in the form of dissolution, the way in which it can and does occur, and its consequences.

Death

Until fairly recently marriages ended most frequently by the death of one spouse. It was only in the mid-1970s that the number of marriages terminated by divorce exceeded those terminated by death. Thus, the incidence of "broken" families has not changed substantially for quite a while, though the reason for dissolution is different and significant. The issue of widowhood has been discussed in several earlier chapters, and needs no further elaboration here.

Annulment

Annulment, a relatively rare way to dissolve a marriage, declares that a marriage never formally existed and was never validly contracted. The grounds for annulling a marriage must have occurred before or at the point of marriage, rather than after. The legally accepted reasons for annulment include being under the legal age or insane at the time of contracting the marriage, already having a spouse (*bigamy*) or entering into a marriage either under duress or by being defrauded.

Since practicing Roman Catholics who divorce cannot remarry in the Church, they must have their marriage annulled if they wish to marry again. The grounds for an annulment include an incestuous marriage, *impotence* (a man's inability to have or maintain an erection to effect sexual intercourse), nonconsummation (not having sexual intercourse), intent by one of the marital partners not to have children, being under age (sixteen for a boy, fourteen for a girl), duress, or lack of love.

Separation

Married couples may separate from each other, either mutually and legally or by one party deserting the other.

LEGAL SEPARATION

This form of separation does not formally terminate a marriage, but is often a step in that process. It defines the obligations marital partners have to one another while living apart, presumably while contemplating a divorce. Legal separation is a binding contract enforceable by the courts that often deals with issues of alimony, child custody, and the division of marital resources. The contract often provides for separate maintenance and prohibits cohabitation.

Not all separations end in divorce. In some cases separate maintenance is continued for some time. This is especially appealing to couples who need to retain their marital status for personal or professional reasons but who cannot live together. In a small number of cases the partners decide to resume their marriage.

INFORMAL SEPARATION

Though similar to a legal separation in its mutuality, no lawyer, court, or legally binding contract is involved. The two partners simply decide that they can no longer live together and work out an informal arrangement to live apart and settle the issues of custody, support, and resource distribution between themselves. From a legal point of view the two partners are still married and are subject to all the obligations of marriage and parenthood. This, too, is occasionally seen as useful to couples who cannot live together but who still wish to retain their status as married people.

Desertion or Abandonment

In some cases a separation is unilateral and is not done through a legal process. Though both husbands and wives desert their families, husbands do so more frequently. One major reason for abandonment is their desire to escape the financial demands of marriage. Desertion usually leads to a lack of family support by the deserting member, which is legally a crime. The abandoned spouse is often further disadvantaged by not being free to marry for several years.

Divorce

Divorce is the legal process through which a marriage is dissolved. Traditionally divorce implied that one of the parties was guilty of some transgression in the marriage, someone was at "fault." Initially adultery and physical cruelty were the only bases for divorce; later a number of other transgressions were added, such as abandonment, habitual drunkenness, and mental cruelty.

The concept of fault was embedded in an adversarial legal process in which the plaintiff (accuser) had to prove that the defendant (accused) had committed some wrong and therefore should sustain the financial liabilities of divorce. Also, the divorce laws were predicated on traditional conceptions of gender roles in which the wife was supposed to devote herself to the care of the family and the husband to providing for its economic needs. If the husband was the guilty party he was expected to pay *alimony* (a particular level of financial support for a specified period of time); if the wife was at fault she was generally not awarded alimony. *Child support* was typically ordered to be paid by the father until a child reached the age of legal majority.

In 1970 California passed the first *no-fault divorce law* in which proving fault was not required to gain a divorce. Irreconcilable differences were deemed adequate grounds for divorce. Every state currently has some version of this form. The approach eliminates the concept of fault and its use in determining financial settlements, the adversarial process, and defines new norms of gender equality rather than reinforcing traditional views.

No-fault divorce has reduced the number of women receiving alimony as well as the amount and length of time of such awards. An additional problem is the lack of payment of these court-mandated awards by a substantial number of ex-husbands.

ALTERNATIVES TO DIVORCE

Conflict and unhappiness do not always lead to divorce. In some marriages the alternatives are considered to be worse. If there are financial or status reasons to maintain an unsatisfying marriage, some people will use separation as a way of coping. Others may simply decide to maintain their marriage but invest little energy in it. The result is likely to be a "conflict-habituated" or "devitalized" marriage.

THE STATISTICS OF DIVORCE

The Calculation of Divorce Rates

Divorce rates can be and are calculated in a number of different ways. These alternative approaches to determining divorce rates affect the interpretation of trends in divorce.

DIFFERENT DIVORCE RATES

Number of Divorces Per Year. Often the media report an increase in the number of divorces in a particular year compared with a decade earlier. This statistic is misleading since it does not take into account the number of people in the population or the number of those who get married.

Ratio of Divorces to Marriages in a Particular Year. This technique is often used in the media because of its ease of calculation. However, it mixes apples and oranges in that the marriages all take place in one year but the divorces are from marriages that have taken place over a range of different years. Also, even if the number of divorces remains the same from the previous year, if there is a reduction in the number of marriages in the same year the divorce rate (calculated in this way) will be higher though the number of divorces has not in fact changed. Furthermore, this form of calculation does not take into account any changes in population that may affect the divorce and marriage rates.

Crude Divorce Rate. This statistic is the number of divorces in any year per 1,000 population, and thus compensates for one of the problems of the two previous methods. However, the population base used includes children and adults who are not married, both categories of people who are not at risk for divorce. Consequently, while it is an improvement over the other methods, it still has an important limitation.

Refined Divorce Rate. This rate is the number of divorces per 1,000 married women over the age of fifteen. It more reasonably compares divorces to the population likely to generate them and against which they should be compared. *Age-specific refined divorce rates* can also be calculated to look at the divorce rate for any particular age group.

Longitudinal Divorce Rates. An extremely useful but difficult way to calculate divorce rates would be to take a sample of married couples and follow them for a number of years. The divorce rate can be calculated more directly in this fashion because the same couples form the entire population studied. However, the practical difficulties of carrying out such a long-term study have made it a rarity.

Statistical Trends

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

Divorce is permitted in practically all countries around the world, with Roman Catholic Ireland and Spain the conspicuous exceptions. Although precise cross-national comparisons are difficult because of the different methods and levels of precision in recording and reporting divorce statistics, it does appear that the United States probably has the highest divorce rate in the world. For example, in 1986 the crude divorce rate for the United States was 4.8, while it was 3.1 for Germany, 2.4 in Canada, and 1.2 in Israel (United Nations, 1986).

Various explanations of these differences in divorce rates across societies have been attempted. One important research study (Trent and South, 1989) suggests that there is a complex relationship among several societal factors that influence the divorce rate. As societies industrialize and become more modern, not only do they have a high sex ratio (more men than women), but more women enter the labor force. In addition to leading to higher divorce rates, these patterns also force changes in traditional patriarchal practices. As a consequence, the needs of individuals and the nuclear family are given greater weight than those of the extended kin network. This reduces the social control mechanisms that maintain less than satisfying marriages, thereby increasing the likelihood of divorce. The United States is characterized by just these factors, which explains its high divorce rate.

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES

The general perception of a spectacular rise in the divorce rate during and immediately after World War II is both true and incomplete. There was a sharp rise at this time; however, it was simply a brief dramatic change in an already rising divorce rate. The rate of divorce in the United States began to rise after the Civil War, and remained fairly level until it rose sharply, though briefly, after World War I. It remained fairly constant until World War II, and then became relatively stable during the 1950s. Changing conceptions of marriage and gender roles along with no-fault laws during the 1960s and 1970s led to another sharp increase which reached its peak during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The rate subsequently leveled off again during the 1980s and actually dipped at the end of the past decade (see Fig. 19.1).

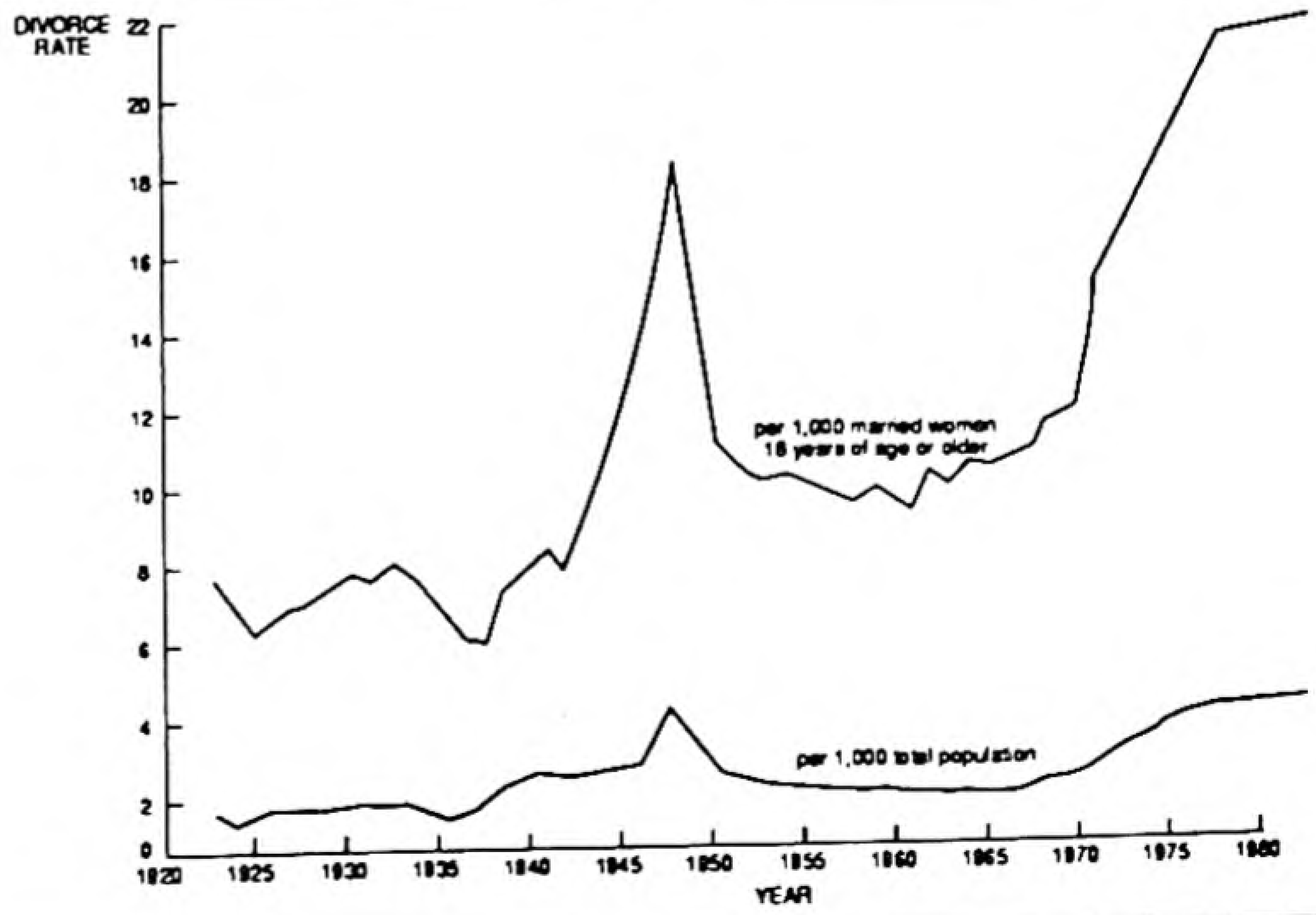

Fig. 19.1 Divorce Rates: United States, 1920–1980 (Source: Furstenberg and Spanier [1984:36]. Reprinted by Permission of Sage Publications)

It is interesting that sharp increases in the divorce rates appear to occur during and immediately after major wars. Clearly war induces marriages that might not otherwise have taken place and are more likely to fail. War also forces society to modify conceptions of gender roles, if only temporarily. Women's status is often enhanced and women are afforded greater employment opportunities, which give them a greater measure of independence and security. The contemporary rate of divorce is also maintained by greater institutional support for divorced women and the decreased stigma attached to divorce.

PREDICTION OF FUTURE TRENDS

Predicting the future is always risky since it often involves making assumptions that current trends will continue. If contemporary factors change, as is often likely, then so will the future. Given all of these cautions, however, a number of investigators have attempted to project future rates of divorce in the United States. These estimates suggest that perhaps from one-half to two-thirds of all future first marriages will end in divorce.

Though these predictive estimates suggest a high rate of divorce, optimists would claim that they do not necessarily reflect an increased unhappiness in marriage. Such optimists would argue that the divorce rate is more a consequence of increased opportunities to end an unhappy marriage and greater social support for that choice. In this sense, the increased divorce rate may be seen as a positive trend—a better way of resolving marital incompatibility than remaining in a "conflict-habituated" or "devitalized" marriage. The high rate of remarriage also suggests that the relatively high divorce rate does not signal the failure of marriage as an institution, but a judgment about a particular partner.

Societal Patterns

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS AFFECTING DIVORCE RATES

The likelihood of divorce is not the same for all marriages. Research has demonstrated that there are both individual and social characteristics that affect the likelihood of divorce. In no special order, the following are factors that have been found to be associated with the probability of divorce:

Social Class. Working-class individuals have a higher divorce rate than those in the middle class. However, recent studies have suggested that there may be a difference between men and women. While the generalization seems to apply to men, it is less straightforward for women. High status women have a higher divorce rate than those with less status; one explanation is that higher status women are more economically and socially independent and are better able to maintain themselves after a divorce.

Race. African-Americans have a higher divorce rate than whites. This difference has been interpreted as a function of the economic problems and discrimination faced by African-Americans. When whites and African-

Americans of the same social and income levels are compared, the difference in the rate of divorce appears negligible.

Age at Marriage. One of the most important factors affecting the likelihood of divorce is age. Practically every study shows that those marrying in their teens have a higher divorce rate than those marrying in their twenties or thirties. This finding is typically explained by the relative immaturity of the young and their inability to deal with the complexities of married life.

Religion and Religiosity. Jews have the lowest divorce rate of the three major religious groups in the United States, with Catholics having the next lowest rate and Protestants the highest (though there are substantial differences among the various Protestant denominations). These religions differ in the priority they give to the needs of the group over those of the individual. Protestants place major emphasis on the individual, while Catholics and Jews stress the importance of the group. These differences help explain the variation in divorce rates noted among these religious groups. Also, religious intermarriages tend to have a higher rate of divorce than marriages between two people of the same religion. Whether this is due to incompatibility of background or to discrimination and societal pressure is difficult to determine. Finally, in each religious group, those who are more religious are less likely to divorce than the less religious. The more religious are seen as being more socially conservative and thus adhering to more traditional views of the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage.

Previous Marital Status. The divorce rate for those previously married is somewhat higher than for first marriages. One explanation offered is that those who have divorced before are more likely to contemplate divorce as an option in a subsequent unhappy marriage than those without that experience.

Having Divorced Parents. Experiencing the divorce of one's parents' marriage reinforces that act as a usable option in the face of one's own marital difficulties.

Premarital Cohabitation. Contrary to earlier expectations that it would eliminate unsuitable marriages, cohabitation before marriage actually results in higher rates of divorce. Recent research suggests that cohabitation by itself may not affect the divorce rate; the nature and length of cohabitation are the influential factors.

Premarital Conception or Pregnancy. This factor has consistently been associated with a higher divorce rate. Married couples who have had a premarital conception or birth tend to be young; also, they often have lower family incomes and increased economic pressure and strain. However, the precise reason for this persistent research finding is not really clear.

The Course and Duration of the Marriage. While a marriage can break up at any time, the current median duration of marriage for those seeking a divorce is almost seven years. In part this is explained by the difficulties faced early in marriage, initial attempts to work out these problems, and the legal and bureaucratic requirements to actually obtain a divorce. This sequence takes some time, several years in most cases. In addition, divorce seems to occur at crisis points in marriage. These crises include the birth of the first child, serious illness of a family member, mounting financial difficulties, and the "empty nest."

Geographical Factors. Rates are highest in the South, closely followed by the West, and lowest in the East. No clear explanation is available for these differences. The rates are also higher in urban and metropolitan areas than in rural communities. The complexities and stress of urban life combined with the relative anonymity that reduces social control most likely plays a role in these geographical differences.

Social Bases of the Reasons for Divorce

There are obviously many reasons for obtaining a divorce. Each marriage is different, as is each couple's experiences. For some, there is a basic unhappiness in the relationship; for others, there is a specific problem such as sexuality, infidelity, physical abuse, changing interests of husbands and wives or overcommitment to work. However, Henslin (1985) has usefully pointed out six societal trends that form the social context for understanding the reasons why couples divorce.

INCOMPATIBLE GENDER ROLES

The traditional gender roles of men and women were once generally accepted. The husband was expected to be dominant and oriented to the outside world whereas the wife was expected to be submissive to his authority and to focus her attention on the home and children. Today these roles have changed substantially. When these changes are not perceived or accepted by both partners, the gender roles often conflict. Thus, any major conflict can lead to divorce.

SOCIAL SEPARATION OF MEN AND WOMEN

By and large, men and women are placed in different social worlds. These different social locations emphasize dissimilar aspects of life, ways of dealing with problems, and modes of deciding what is or is not important. However, spouses share the same "time/space/relational/income/sexual/emotional dimensions of life-space" (Henslin, 1985:425). Consequently, it is likely that the differences between them due to their earlier social separation will result in conflict.

PRESSURES OF ADULT LIFE

The requirements of adult life introduce substantial stress into marriage. Coping with weekly or monthly bills, sustaining an acceptable style of life, and responding to the various demands of the job in or outside the home add strain to most marriages. These duties also take time and energy away from the basic intimacy involved in the marital relationship.

ROUTINES OF MARRIED LIFE

Most ongoing activities fall into settled routines after awhile. Novelty and freshness wear off, and yet the daily requirements of a routine need to be met anyway. This is no less true of married life than it is of the workplace. Initially each meeting or joint activity was exciting and unpredictable; after awhile each becomes ordinary and predictable. Each partner knows what the other is likely to do or not do. This predictability can provide a measure of security in the relationship. However, it can also lead to a sense of boredom, which may be relieved in a number of ways that are harmful to the marriage.

LOSS OF TRADITIONAL FAMILY FUNCTIONS

Many of the traditional functions of the family are no longer the major or sole responsibility of the nuclear family; they have been taken over by other social institutions. In an earlier rural America, marital partners typically cooperated in running the family farm and raising the children. Each partner was necessary to the other if the family functions were to be carried out. These functions often served to bind family members to each other and made the family a useful social institution, even if its members may not have always been completely happy. The family functioned to provide each person with the basic necessities of life and with intimate relationships. It was the center of existence. This is no longer true for many contemporary families.

The central function of the family in organizing and providing for life's necessities is now carried out through a number of other social institutions. Health care is provided through the medical profession and safety and security through the police and criminal justice system. The economic resources to sustain a standard of living are acquired through outside employment and are dependent on the firm, factory or store rather than the family.

These changes have made the family less crucial to individuals. And if the institution does not meet their needs, family members believe they can get along without it.

EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUAL HAPPINESS AND PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

The family's importance today rests on its ability to provide its members with a substantial measure of personal happiness and fulfillment. It has become less of a social obligation and more of an avenue for personal satisfaction and growth. Consequently, if the family does not fulfill these individual needs, its members feel less commitment to maintain it.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR DIVORCED WOMEN

Divorce rates depend on the options available to those in unsatisfying marriages. Earlier, women tended to have few alternatives to marriage. Today, Henslin (1985) argues, women are better able to be independent of marriage, either through employment or by using a greatly expanded welfare system. Moreover, there is less stigma attached to divorce than in previous times.

STEREOTYPED AND RESTRICTIVE MARITAL ROLES

Marriage, for many, involves a stereotyped and limited set of expectations for both husbands and wives. These restrictive roles are seen as limiting flexibility and personal growth. While these are in the process of changing, constraining marital roles still exist in some, if not many marriages and cause friction leading to divorce.

PROCESSES OF DIVORCE

Divorce is not only a legal action, it also involves a range of economic, psychological, and social processes. These various aspects of divorce capture its experience as a set of overlapping processes that Bohannan (1971) calls the "six stations of divorce."

Emotional Divorce

Even before the actual breakup of the marriage, the partners psychologically withdraw from the relationship. They are less affectionate to one another, engage in fewer of the usual pleasantries of marriage, and are generally unresponsive. They fail to provide the necessary emotional support to one another upon which marriages generally depend.

Legal Divorce

At some point one or both partners take the necessary legal steps to dissolve the marriage. Some may move out and establish a separate residence, while others may initiate a legal separation. The adversarial nature of the legal system, despite no-fault divorce provisions, often aggravates a delicate emotional situation.

Economic Divorce

The decisions required to divide the couple's money, property, and other economic resources is another step in the complicated process of divorce. Both the economic value of these resources and the sentimental value attached to some items can contribute to the unpleasantness surrounding most divorces. The issue of equitable or equal sharing of *community property* is a factor in divorce in a number of states, as are the questions of *alimony/spousal support payments/maintenance.*

Coparental Divorce

In the event there are children involved, divorce also raises at least two issues. The first is the psychological, social, and economic effects of divorce on the children. The second concerns the various issues of custody that need to be decided—who gets custody and what visitation rights are available to the noncustodial parent?

Community Divorce

Divorce is generally a public affair; others know about it and it changes the nature of various other relationships. In-law relationships are legally dissolved, though emotional and social ties may persist. Mutual friends are often put in the awkward position of choosing sides or deciding with whom to remain friends, especially if the divorce has been ridden with conflict. This is an important social component of the divorce process.

Psychic Divorce

Divorce requires a shift from interdependency to autonomy. In marriage, marital partners take each other into account and their lives become intertwined and interdependent. Each comes to depend on the other for the satisfaction of at least some personal and social needs. After divorce, each partner must establish emotional autonomy and self confidence. Typically this shift parallels the process of grief after any major loss—shock and denial, anger and depression, and, finally, taking responsibility for one's own life.

DIVORCE MEDIATION

In recent years, a new element in the divorce process has been receiving increasing attention and use. *Divorce mediation* is a process of conflict resolution during divorce that uses the assistance of a trained neutral party. Generally divorce mediation is relatively unstructured, informal, and conducted in private. The focus is not on trying to save the marriage but on separating as easily as possible. The mediator is a facilitator to the process without the power to control it or to make the necessary decisions. The two former marital partners retain control of the outcome.

There are several advantages to divorce mediation over court-mandated or lawyer-proposed settlements. It often leads to faster resolution of differences over resource distribution than under the adversarial process inherent in a strictly legalistic approach. It is typically cheaper than hiring lawyers on both sides. Most importantly, those using divorce mediation are more likely to see the mediated settlement as fair and more acceptable. This last advantage is especially important in issues involving child custody.

EFFECTS OF DIVORCE

Consequences for Children

If the current divorce rate continues, approximately forty percent of all white children and three-quarters of all African-American children will experience their parents' divorce before they are sixteen years old. As difficult as divorce is for the marital partners, it is often more difficult for the children. They are subject both to the conflict that often precedes the divorce and to the wrenching changes in their lives that divorce brings. It now seems clear, however, that children with divorced parents do not have as many adjustment problems as do children remaining in intact but conflict-ridden families.

Age and Gender Differences

The consequences of divorce for children vary by age and gender. At the earliest ages, preschoolers, both boys and girls, tend to react similarly. They have a distinct fear of being abandoned and as a consequence tend to cling more than usual and to exhibit regressive behavior.

BOYS

In general, divorce is likely to have a more immediate and visible negative effect on young boys than girls. In the early elementary grades boys from divorced homes were found to be less able to concentrate. Their relations with peers were either overly hostile and aggressive or they withdrew from such contact. They gave evidence of feeling betrayed, rejected, and abandoned. Older boys, ages nine to nineteen, made better adjustments immediately following the divorce than the younger boys; but ten years after the divorce many reported that they were lonely and unhappy. Furthermore, they seemed to have difficulty in establishing satisfying relationships with women.

GIRLS

In general, girls appear to take their parents' divorce in stride. Their childhood and adolescent years seem to be marked by good academic, emotional, and social adjustment. However, it appears that girls begin to manifest the negative effects ten to fifteen years later, in what has consequently been termed a "sleeper effect." The major manifestation of problems relating to the parents' divorce involves the inability of older daughters to sustain an intimate relationship with a man. There is a tendency for women whose parents have subsequently divorced to marry early and then divorce early.

In general, the negative effects of divorce are eased somewhat if the child maintains a close relationship with the noncustodial parent. That is equally true of boys and girls.

Custody Issues

Child custody is often one of the major battlegrounds of divorce because the decision involves a number of issues that often do not surface directly. Sometimes a custody dispute represents a way of trying to hold the marriage together or to get revenge. Sometimes it involves conceptions of self-worth or is used to maintain a semblance of emotional stability at a time of great stress. Sometimes it is a tactic to establish one parent's position in the divorce struggle. And sometimes it involves different conceptions of what is in the best interests of the child.

In the majority of cases the couple and their lawyers come to some reasonable agreement about child custody. This arrangement is then ratified by the court to give it legal weight. In some cases, however, the two partners cannot agree and the court will then impose a custody arrangement.

In an attempt to stem the growing number of kidnappings by the noncustodial parent (about 100,000 a year), all states except Massachusetts have added the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act to their state laws. This law requires that the state in which the original divorce was filed and custody arrangements made has the "closest attachment" and shall decide any custody issues.

TYPES OF CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS

There are several forms that child custody can take following divorce. Each has a different rationale and requires different arrangements between the two parents as well as the child.

Sole Custody. This was the most frequent way this issue was handled in the past. The decision for custody was guided by the *tender years doctrine*, which held that children are better off with their mother than their father. Unless the mother was shown to be grossly unfit, she was almost always awarded sole custody. This view was supported by the research of educators, pediatricians, and social scientists early in the twentieth century. This doctrine was overturned in New York and California in 1973 on the basis of accumulating evidence which showed that the earlier view was based on traditional gender role stereotypes. The present guiding principle in custody cases today is what is "in the best interests of the child." However, many judges still assume that the mother is automatically the better parent unless there is specific evidence to the contrary. In fact, about ninety percent of all child custody cases result in the mother being awarded sole custody. There is currently a controversy in the country over the denial of visitation rights to noncustodial fathers and to grandparents. Though there have been several court cases about this issue, there is no definitive resolution at the present time.

Split Custody. This form of custody involves families with two or more children. In this circumstance each parent takes sole responsibility for one or more of the children. This is not a common arrangement since judges are often reluctant to separate siblings.

Joint Custody. Increasingly popular, this form requires both parents to be involved, though not necessarily equally, in the decisions and responsibilities that affect their children. There is often great flexibility permitted in how this shared obligation is to be carried out. However, this form requires that the parents live geographically close and is most effective when they have a relatively amicable relationship. The child often lives with each parent for some alternating though specified period of time; weekly, monthly or by the season.

The increasing use of joint custody is a way of maintaining fathers' influence and involvement in the raising of children. About two-thirds of the states explicitly refer to joint custody in the relevant laws, an indication of its growing institutional support.

CHILD SUPPORT

Most divorced women who are given custody of their children are also awarded child support payments. However, there is also a substantial minority of divorced women without custody of their children who pay child support to their former husbands. Importantly, only about half of all court-awarded child support payments are paid in full; and in about one-fourth of the cases, nothing is paid. The total of unpaid child support in the United States is over $3 billion a year. Payments and visits appear to decrease with the length of time since the divorce. There is some evidence that the more closely involved noncustodial parents are with their children, the more likely they will provide the necessary child support.

Recent legislation has strengthened the hand of the states to improve collection procedures for court-ordered payments. This may be accomplished through mandatory withholding from the noncustodial parent's salary or through federal income tax mechanisms. Currently child-support payments take legal precedence over all debt obligations other than federal income tax liabilities.

Consequences for the Family

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Divorce results in changed economic circumstances for all members of the family. In general, the absolute income of both divorced men and women declines. However, because mothers are often awarded custody of their children, the actual standard of living of divorced women decreases while that of divorced men increases; the difference is even more striking as the family's initial income gets higher (see Table 19.1).

The gender difference in standard of living in single parent households after divorce has come to be called the *feminization of poverty*. It results from a variety of factors. Alimony or spousal support payments and child support, even when they are paid, are often too low. Also, in many cases they are either not paid or are paid only in part. More importantly, however, women are less likely to work than men, especially if they have young

Annual Family Income	Income per Person Before Divorce	Income per Person After Divorce	
		Husband	Wife
Under $20,000	$6,050	$10,450	$7,000
$20,000–29,999	11,000	18,050	8,900
$30,000–39,999	7,500	27,000	13,000
$40,000 and over	23,500	45,700	12,000

Table 19.1 Husbands' and Wives' Income Before and After Divorce (Adapted from Weitzman [1981])

children, and when they do work they receive lower wages. On the average, men earn about twice as much as women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989).

SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

Economic changes are not the only ones that take place after divorce. Single parents experience life differently than two-parent families. Family roles that were filled in a particular way before divorce need to be reallocated. Somebody must pick up the responsibilities originally carried out by the absent, noncustodial parent. Communication remains central to effective family functioning even though changes in its patterns are now required. These changes are especially important to the success of the parental role in this new circumstance.

Adults in single-parent households, especially women, report greater levels of anxiety and depression. They are in greater need of a social network that provides emotional and practical support. Contrary to expectations, employed mothers in single-parent households spend more time in volunteer work than employed mothers in two-parent families. The contacts made in the course of this volunteerism coupled with social friends and co-workers often form the core of a necessary social support network.

SOCIAL LIFE

Divorce drastically affects the social life of the newly single. There is often a reduction in the friendship circle, particularly with those who have links to the former spouse. However, it is also true that new singles make new friends. Divorced individuals find themselves back in the world of the singles with considerably more experiences and skills to draw upon than they had before marriage.

A person's sexual life does not end with divorce. In fact, research suggests that the divorced have more active sexual lives than never married singles. Moreover, divorced women report that their postmarital sexual life is more satisfying than their marital sexual experience.

Life after divorce is complex. While friendships and sexuality continue, loneliness and anxiety are also prevalent. The first year or two is especially difficult as a range of adjustments need to be made. Several studies have found that about five years after the divorce most men and women reported satisfaction with the quality of their lives. Presumably they had successfully made many of the necessary adjustments to their changed situation. One major adjustment for many, remarriage, is the subject of the next chapter.

All marriages end, either by death, annulment, separation or divorce. It is only recently that the number of families broken by divorce exceeded that ended by the death of one of the partners. Though divorce rates can be calculated in a number of different ways, all methods have indicated relative stability in divorce rates in the United States with the exception of sharp increases after the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. Changing conceptions of gender roles and increasing autonomy of women during wartime have been used to explain these statistics. The rate continued to rise after World War II, stabilized in the 1980s, and dipped slightly at the end of the decade. Predictions are that from one-half to two-thirds of all first marriages in the future will end in divorce.

The United States probably has the highest divorce rate in the world. Within the United States the divorce rate is influenced by a number of social and individual factors. Moreover, there are a number of social factors that provide the context for divorce.

Divorce involves a series of economic, psychological, social, and legal processes. Partners separate from each other in a variety of different ways, each of which is often difficult and painful. Divorce mediation has developed to ease the conflicts inherent in separating.

Divorce profoundly affects children, depending on age and gender. Boys are more likely to be immediately and negatively affected by divorce, while there is more of a "sleeper effect" for girls. Decisions over custody of the children, sole or joint, are often among the most difficult to resolve. While custody is overwhelmingly awarded to mothers, there has been a slight tendency toward joint custody more recently.

Divorce changes both the economic and social circumstances of both partners. The standard of living of men tends to increase and that of women decrease. Social support networks are crucial after divorce, especially for the single-parent household. Divorced persons report a more active sexual life than unmarried persons, one that is more satisfying than that during their marriage. Most studies report that the first few years after divorce are difficult, but that after about five years divorced men and women indicate that they are quite satisfied with the quality of their life.

20

Reestablishing Families: Remarriage and Reconstituted Families

This chapter considers remarriage, a common response to family dissolution. The process of remarriage parallels that of divorce, and remarriages vary in happiness and stability. Remarriage creates a new type of family with characteristics and concerns that are somewhat different from primary families. One specific and important difference involves the experience of being a stepparent or stepchild.

THE STATISTICS OF REMARRIAGE

Frequency

Remarriage is increasingly common among the divorced. Until the end of World War I most remarriages involved those who were widowed. However, economic and social changes that made divorce and remarriage more acceptable have led to higher rates of both. The increase in the remarriage rate peaked toward the end of World War II and gradually decreased until it began to rise once more through the 1960s; it declined slowly thereafter, though the rate seems to have slowed and may be leveling off (see Fig. 20.1). Nevertheless, by 1975 about 85 percent of all remarriages involved a divorced partner and by 1987 the figure was 91 percent. Approximately three fourths of all those who divorce eventually remarry.

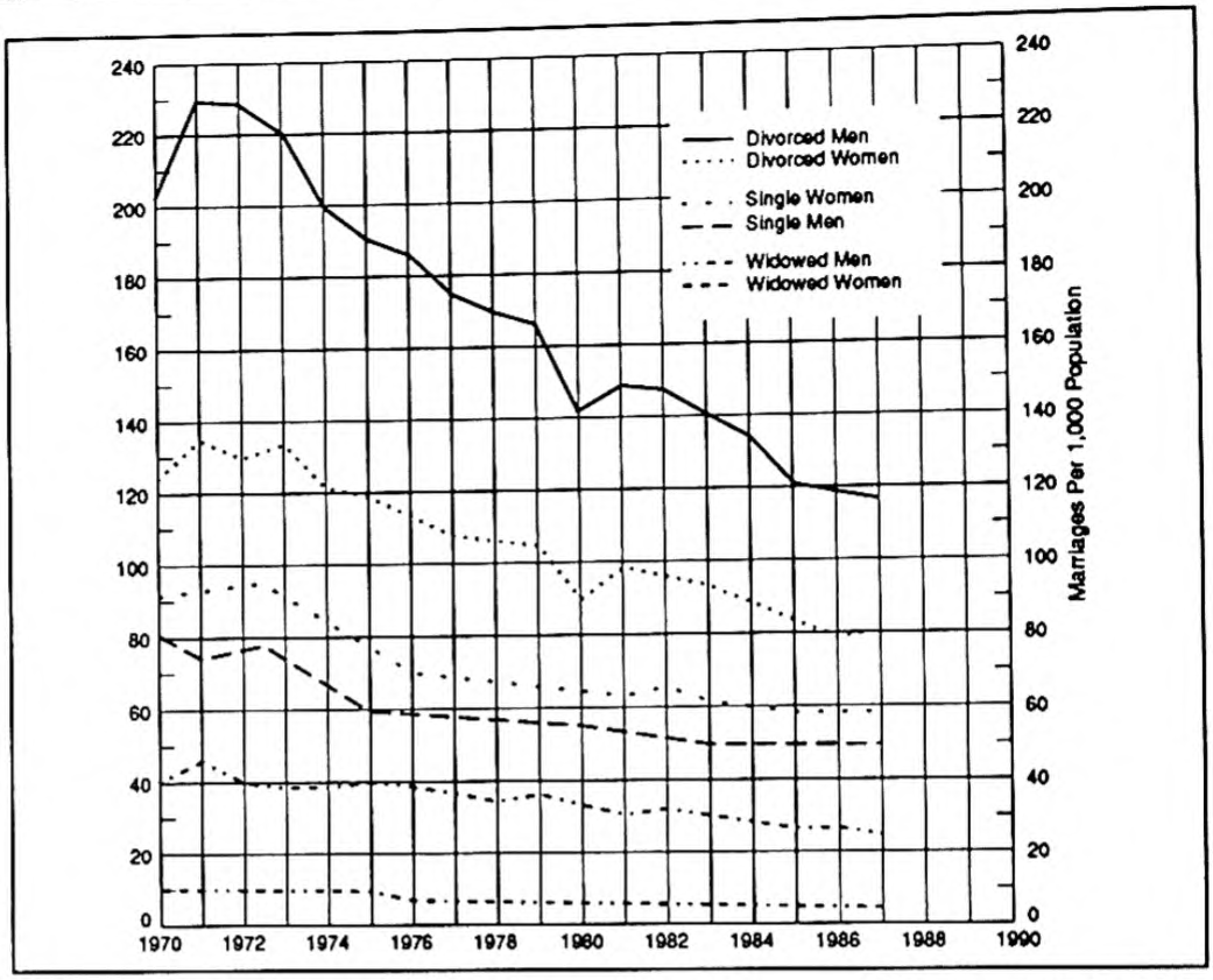

Fig. 20.1 Marriage Rates by Previous Marital Status and Gender, 1970–1987 (Source: National Center for Health Statistics [1990:3])

Timing

On average most divorced people who remarry do so within three years; the median time between divorce and remarriage in 1987 was 2.2 years for men and 2.5 years for women. Earlier this interval was shorter. In 1970 it was about 1 year for women and 0.9 of a year for men. Men tend to remarry more quickly than do women. This gender difference is probably due to economic circumstances, child custody problems, and the different advantages marriage offers men and women.

These statistics refer to remarriage reported for particular years (1987 and 1970, respectively). At present, however, the median interval between divorce and remarriage *at any time* during a divorced person's life is about seven years. The courtship period before remarriage is, in general, shorter than that before first marriages, except for college-educated women. In 1987 the average age at remarriage was 36.7 for men and 33.3 for women; for comparison, it was 25.3 and 23.5, respectively, for first marriages. Social factors that influence both the probability of remarriage and its timing will be discussed below.

Social Factors Affecting Remarriage Rates

Many factors influence the likelihood that a divorced person will remarry.

AGE

Younger divorced persons are more likely than older ones to remarry. In 1987 the median age for remarriage of divorced women was thirty-three years of age; for divorced men it was thirty-seven. The highest rate of remarriage is for those in their twenties, after which it begins to decline sharply for the older age brackets. Furthermore, younger divorced people remarry sooner than older ones. In part this has to do with the fact that younger divorced people are less likely to have children, who generally make them less desirable remarriage partners. Also, younger people are also more likely to be physically attractive, which gives them a competitive edge for remarriage.

GENDER

In general, divorced men are more likely to marry than divorced women. About 85 percent of divorced men remarry, compared with approximately 66 percent of divorced women. This gender difference may be a result of economic factors as well as the complications of child custody.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Though the exact reasons are not clear, there are differences among African-Americans, Hispanics, and whites in the frequency of remarriage. Divorced whites are about 50 percent more likely than divorced African-Americans to remarry. Hispanics are even less likely to remarry than either of the other two groups.

SOCIAL CLASS

The effect of social class on remarriage differs by gender. For men, the higher the social class, the greater the likelihood of remarriage. However, women in the higher social classes are less likely to remarry than women in lower social classes. One explanation is that men are following the pattern which shows that those with more resources are able to get their needs met; in this case the need is for marriage, which is seen as advantageous to men. Upper-class men have the money and position to attract a partner and to support a family, even one that may already include children. On the other hand, women with good positions and considerable education are more likely than those without these resources to be independent and have the economic and social means to take care of themselves without the necessity of remarriage.

WORK STATUS AND OCCUPATION

Although tied somewhat to social class, remarriage varies depending on a person's work status and occupation. Divorced women who are not working or who are dissatisfied with their jobs are more likely to remarry. Clearly these women have an incentive to marry, either for support or to be able to abandon an unsatisfying work situation.

In general, remarriage rates are higher for managerial occupations than for most professions. However, there is considerable variation in remarriage rates among the different professional occupations. Physicians, public and high-school teachers, and registered nurses have lower rates of remarriage after divorce than do artists, entertainers, social scientists, social workers, and writers. No simple explanations are available to account for these differences.

CHILDREN

Having custody of children from a previous marriage decreases the probability of remarriage. One study estimated that forty percent of divorced women with three or more children and twenty-five percent of those with one or two children would never remarry. In part this is due to the economic difficulty men may perceive in supporting an existing family and also to the effect the children may have on the courtship process.

GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

Though no easy explanation has been advanced, remarriage rates are lowest in the Northeast. The rate in the South is twice as high, and in the North Central and West it is intermediate.

THE PROCESSES OF REMARRIAGE

Six Stations of Remarriage

Just as divorce is an ongoing process, so too is remarriage. Goetting (1982) used the concept of "six stations of divorce" (Bohannon, 1971) and adapted it to use in understanding remarriage. In effect, all of the stages through which the divorce proceeded need to be reversed, though the order is somewhat different. As with the earlier formulation, not all individuals go through these stages in the same sequence or with the same depth of involvement.

EMOTIONAL REMARRIAGE

The emotional commitment to an intimate relationship that has been withdrawn as a consequence of the divorce process needs to be reinvested in the new partnership. For many people this emotional reinvestment is scary. Yet, it is an essential step in reestablishing a marital bond.

PSYCHIC REMARRIAGE

There must be not only an emotional commitment to the new relationship, but also an investment in a joint identity. This implies some reduction in personal independence and autonomy as a consequence of the return to interdependence.

COMMUNITY REMARRIAGE

Reestablishment of community ties to friends and new family is part of the process of remarriage. Also, some earlier friends—especially single friends—often become less important than they were previously, or are dropped altogether. In short a somewhat new pattern of social relationships is established through remarriage.

PARENTAL REMARRIAGE

In remarriages that involve children from a previous marriage a reformulation of parental roles and responsibilities is necessary. The details of this new type of family is discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

ECONOMIC REMARRIAGE

The economic aspects of family life change after remarriage. Arrangements established to deal with the family's economic needs after divorce may no longer be appropriate or useful. Alimony or spousal support payments made to an ex-wife or ex-husband stop when they remarry; the way in which the family was supported may change. In short, new modes of resource acquisition and distribution may occur. The family needs to be reestablished as an economic as well as social unit in remarriage.

LEGAL REMARRIAGE

Remarriage is a type of marriage, a legally binding relationship. The legal contract may affect support payments from the previous spouse, child custody arrangements, insurance contracts, inheritance rights, medical coverage, and pension rights. The same careful thought that was needed to establish a legal marriage in the first instance is at least as important in remarriage, perhaps even more, since there are often children and additional economic resources that need to be considered. It is not surprising, then, that prenuptial contracts are becoming more frequent in remarriages. These agreements have relevance not only to the new couple but also to all children and even former spouses, since previous assets and commitments may be involved.

Partner Choice in Remarriage

The choices involved in choosing a partner for remarriage are in many ways similar to those involved in first marriages, though the field of eligibles is likely to be smaller. Once more the issue involves whether partners will be similar to (endogamy/homogamy) or complement each other (heterogamy).

ENDOGAMY/HOMOGAMY OR HETEROGAMY?

There is some evidence that divorced couples are less endogamous/homogamous in remarriage than those in first marriages. Remarried couples are more likely to vary in age, educational level, and religion than couples in first marriages. The longer the time between divorce and remarriage, the less endogamous/homogamous the remarriage is likely to be. In part, this lower frequency of endogamous/homogamous remarriage may result from the smaller pool of available partners for remarriage.

Many people choose a new marriage partner with more caution than they did originally. Though men see companionship as an important element in a partner selection both for first marriage and remarriage, women apparently place greater importance on it in second or subsequent marriages.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE

Remarriages involve a social exchange between partners. The traditional exchange of sex, companionship, and domestic service (men) for companionship and economic support (women) has been undermined by the greater involvement of women in the labor market and the greater freedom in sexual relationships. More equalitarian exchanges involving the man's expressive qualities and women's ability to contribute to the family's economic resources have evolved. However, remarriage moves the exchange back toward the earlier traditional arrangement by reducing women's bargaining power in at least two ways. First, the traditional expectation that the husband will be older than the wife reduces the choices available to women and directs men toward younger women. Second, since many remarriages involve children, issues of necessary economic support and security tend to weigh more heavily than social and personal suitability in women's choice of a remarriage partner. No similar concern typically affects most divorced men.

STABILITY AND HAPPINESS OF REMARRIAGES

Given the previous marital history of those remarrying, the issues of the stability and happiness of remarriages have been a focus of a growing body of research.

Stability

As pointed out in the first section of this chapter, remarriages are somewhat less stable than first marriages. This is surprising since one would expect that divorced people would have benefitted from their previous marital experience and avoided many of the "mistakes" that led to the dissolution of their marriage. After divorce, the individuals involved presumably have a better idea of what they want in a partner and in a marriage. They have learned what works and what doesn't. Despite this expectation, one calculation showed that the divorce rate for first marriages was 38 percent while for second marriages it was 44 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982); the divorce rate for third or subsequent marriages is even higher.

The probability of success is affected by whether one or both partners have been married before. "Double remarriages," in which both partners have been divorced before, have a higher divorce rate than "single remarriages," in which only one partner has been previously divorced. There are a variety of social factors that affect the stability of remarriage. Three main factors seem to contribute to remarriage instability.

FACTORS AFFECTING STABILITY

Social Class. Divorce is more common among those in the working and lower classes than in the middle class. Those who remarry come disproportionately from the lower and working classes and again have a higher rate of *re*divorce. However, when divorce rates are compared within the same social class, there is little difference between the divorce rate and the redivorce rate.

Greater Acceptance of Divorce. Those who have divorced previously are likely to be more accepting of this type of solution to an unsatisfactory relationship than those who have not. Whether this results from an initial predisposition to take such action or from experiencing divorce as a possible option is not clear. However, divorcing sensitizes a person to knowing the necessary mechanisms involved.

Special Stresses Inherent in Remarriage. All marriages involve some element of stress. However, remarriage raises a series of problems that adds new strains to the family relationships.

Complications of having stepparents and biological parents in the position of making decisions about children makes childrearing and family life more difficult. This problem is further complicated by the lack of clarity of the role of stepparent in American society.

The distribution of family resources of affection, time, effort, space, and finances is often a disturbing factor since such distribution may have differed in the previous family. This is especially true when remarriage brings together children from both marital partners with different histories.

Possible issues of sexual tension between siblings who are not biologically related may be an indirect source of problems in remarriages. These relationships are not covered by the incest taboo.

Life-stage differences among the marital partners may arise due to a wider age variation between them than they experienced in their first marriages.

Lack of clarity about the nature of remarriage, a point taken up later, also adds to the typical stress of this intimate relationship.

Happiness

The fact that remarriages are less stable than first marriages does not necessarily mean that the partners are less happy in them. In fact, one major research study reported that most remarried couples rate their present marriage as much happier than their previous one. Most studies, however, find little or no difference in marital happiness between first and subsequent marriages, except for less happiness in "double remarriages" with children. Apparently, the lower rate of stable remarriages is due less to general differences in unhappiness than to a willingness of those who have used divorce to end a previous unsatisfying situation to do so again.

Well-Being

Earlier research studies and clinical views of marriage and divorce suggested that divorced persons who remarried had a greater sense of well-being than those who did not. In an important recent study, however, Furstenberg and Spanier (1984) found no difference in feelings of well-being between these two groups of divorced persons. They did find, though, that divorced persons who had a greater sense of well-being were more likely to remarry. Also, among those who remarried, the quality of their marriage was related to their sense of well-being. In essence, well-being is likely to give people the confidence to risk another marriage and the success of that venture affects their feelings of well-being.

RECONSTITUTED FAMILIES

Remarriage typically brings together not only two adults, but also children from at least one previous marriage; about sixty percent of all remarriages involve at least one custodial parent and another twenty percent include the noncustodial parent. This new family that is created through remarriage has been referred to by various terms: binuclear family, blended family, reconstituted family, and stepfamily. No one label has commanded universal support, hence all will be used interchangeably.

Characteristics

While not all blended families are alike, they do share some common distinguishing characteristics.

COMMON FEATURES OF RECONSTITUTED FAMILIES

Biological and Nonbiological Parents. In reconstituted families, there is a noncustodial biological parent living outside of the household. In addition, there is a stepparent of the same sex as the absent noncustodial parent.

Membership in Two Households. Most children in blended families are involved not only in that household, but also in that of the noncustodial parent. It is not uncommon for these two situations to present the children with different sets of expectations and rules.

Ambiguity of Stepparent Roles. The precise role of stepparent is not clear. It is only ambiguously defined, and few clear role models are available.

Diversity of Experiential Histories. In contrast to primary families in which the members grow in common and share experiences, members of stepfamilies may have quite different family backgrounds. These affect the way they perceive the family and how they act.

Lack of Assured Bond of Love. The phrase "blood is thicker than water" captures the notion that being related to someone creates a strong bond. In blended families this assured bond is absent and makes necessary the constant need for reaffirmations of love and connection.

Grandparents. Children in reconstituted families are more likely to have one additional set of grandparents than children in primary families or single-parent households. Parents of the noncustodial parents may be a source of difficulty or tension, especially when the relationship between the two biological parents is ridden with conflict. The rights of grandparents are increasingly being tested in the courts; as of yet, there is no definitive resolution of this issue.

Family Life

The processes of family interaction are different in blended families than in primary families. Ihinger-Tallman and Pasley (1987) suggest the usefulness of understanding the nature of family life in these families by examining it as a special version of a small group. One analysis of small groups refers to four social processes—commitment, cohesion, communication, and boundary maintenance. A good deal of blended family life involves these processes—enhancing commitment and cohesion, and establishing acceptable communication patterns and family boundaries.

PROCESSES OF FAMILY LIFE

Commitment. All groups require the commitment of their members. In primary families this commitment is often taken for granted because it is a byproduct of the interdependence created when the members mature and develop jointly within their family. In reconstituted families the conflicts leading to the original divorce and the divorce process itself often undermine the automatic commitment to the family that had been taken for granted.

This is especially true for the children. However, there are several other reasons why the specific nature of stepfamilies may not generate the same level of commitment that tends to exist in primary families.

Selectivity of participants has been one suggested reason. Those in blended families have been through one divorce and thus are more likely to end an unhappy marriage by dissolving it. Given a viable alternative, the couple may lack the necessary level of commitment and motivation to try to resolve the inevitable problems that arise in the family. This has been mentioned as a factor in the higher levels of instability of remarriages.

A lack of clear social norms to guide behavior in reconstituted families may weaken the level of commitment by requiring frequent negotiation between the members for all sorts of behavior that primary families take for granted. Cherlin (1978) argued that remarriage is an "incomplete institution," that the roles and norms that are necessary to guide the behavior in this form of social relationship are poorly defined and unclear. Consequently family members cannot fall back on what is typical or customary; they have to continually work out acceptable definitions of roles and appropriate behavior. For many this is frustrating and debilitating, leading to a reduced commitment.

The instability of those who divorce and remarry has been suggested as another explanation of lower levels of commitment in stepfamilies. This argument assumes that blended families contain a greater proportion of people who have emotional and personal problems that lead them to be unable to commit themselves to any long-term intimate relationships. Also, partners of these unstable individuals may decrease their levels of commitment to the marriage as they begin to realize the full extent of the problems.

Cohesion. The bonds that group members share is one of their major strengths. The cohesion of group members emerges as a consequence of sharing common experiences. Nowhere is this more true than in the family. The cohesion developed in the earlier primary family is not automatically transferred to the new stepfamily. Blended family members know the importance of cohesion, but have not yet developed it to any substantial degree in this new social context. Research suggests that it takes three to five years for members of reconstituted families to share the necessary experiences that lead to the sense of unity and cohesion that is generally prevalent in primary families.

Communication. The importance of communication in the family was discussed earlier. Communication is the key process in the establishment and development of an intimate relationship. A couple's communication patterns develop simultaneously with their relationship, and the children grow up learning them. In stepfamilies, old patterns may no longer be useful or effective and new ones need to be established. Interpretations of meaning, so central to communication, depend on shared experiences; this is especially pertinent to stepchildren and their stepparents.

Boundary Maintenance. All social groups establish boundaries; these define who is a member of the group and who is not. In the primary family, this task is relatively easy. However, in blended families the task is much more complicated. There are always the ex-spouses, in-laws, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins, and their legal as well as social relationship to the reconstituted family is not always clear. The definite boundaries of primary families become much more permeable and open to intrusion by these former family members. Thus, the clarity of the family as a social unit is somewhat muddied. Since family members have different levels of obligations toward each other than to nonfamily members, this difficulty of boundary maintenance may complicate responsibilities and decision making, especially with respect to children.

Stepparenting

All marriages face problems. In first marriages, these problems are likely to entail establishing appropriate levels of maturity, blending autonomy as an individual with interdependence as a couple, and negotiating a satisfying social and sexual relationship. In blended families, the key problem is often being a stepparent.

SOME REASONS FOR PROBLEMS OF STEPPARENTING

While every family is different, there are some common reasons for many of the difficulties faced by stepparents in reconstituted families.

Myths and Stereotypes. Stepparents are almost universally perceived in negative terms. Practically all children have heard or read the stories of Cinderella, Snow White, and Hansel and Gretel and their respective wicked stepmothers. These images color many people's conception of stepparents, consciously or unconsciously. Stepparents, especially stepmothers, often have to contend with the negative hold this myth has on many stepchildren.

Role Ambiguity. The lack of clarity of the role of stepparent is a major source of difficulty. This problem is compounded when the noncustodial parent is available and plays a continuing role in the child's life. The allocation of responsibility and authority between the custodial parent and the stepparent, and between the noncustodial parent and stepparent is not clearly defined either in law or in social practice.

Assuming Bonds of Affection. For many stepchildren, this may be another source of difficulty. The stepparent is not their "real" parent, but only their custodial parent's spouse. However, it is often assumed that stepparents and stepchildren will automatically have the same affectional bonds that exist between children and their biological parents. That is generally not the case. The older the children are at the time of their parents' remarriage, the more difficult is this problem.

Typical Hostility. Stepchildren commonly feel some hostility toward stepparents, and this is another element in the difficulties of blended families. Many stepchildren wish to see their biological parents reunited, to have their original family made whole again. The stepparent is an obstacle to the fulfillment of this wish. Many stepchildren hope that the remarriage will not succeed and engage in behaviors, deliberately or not, that undermine the new relationship. Teenagers typically also have a difficult time accepting their parents' sexuality, which is affirmed by remarriage.

Financial Strain. Money problems, common in blended families, add to the difficulties of stepparenting. Stepfamilies tend to have a lower family income than primary families. In addition, the resources acquired in the divorce may be perceived less as a *family* resource than an individual's or particular parent-child's resource. How resources are used may cause difficulty. The very process of resource allocation and financial decision making often adds to the strains of stepparenting.

STEPMOTHERS

The Cinderella/Snow White/Hansel and Gretel myth often colors the perception of stepmothers, especially among young children. However, there is a contrary societal stereotype of the warm, affectionate, loving mother. The contrast between these two views of stepmothers is often very confusing to children. The fact that there is a noncustodial biological mother who also has a claim on the affection and concern of the children adds to the complexity and difficulty of being a stepmother. These problems are especially evident for the "weekend stepmother," whose husband has custody of his children on weekends and holidays. These women are part-time stepmothers, and face a situation that is typically worse than those faced by women married to the custodial father.

The research is conflicting as to whether stepchildren have better relations with stepmothers or stepfathers, and which type of stepparent makes their social and educational adjustment easier. What is clear is that stepmothers tend to play a more active role in the lives of their stepchildren than do stepfathers, a gender difference similar to that found in primary families.

STEPFATHERS

Since children more often live with their mother after divorce, the stepfather is the more common role in reconstituted families. Interestingly, studies of blended families suggest that stepchildren and their stepfathers get along about as well as do children and their biological fathers. Despite this, stepfathers typically see themselves as less effective fathers than do biological fathers. There are several reasons for this.

An "Outsider" Effect. Many stepfathers see themselves as an extra person in what is essentially a mother-child family. Typically the bond between mothers and children is strong; in a sociological sense, they form a strong in-group into which the man enters as an outsider.

The Realignment of Family Roles. This is often necessitated by remarriage and is another common source of difficulty in stepfamilies. Before remarriage, the activities typically carried out by the husband/father have been reallocated to other members of the family. The stepfather's entrance into the family upsets these newly established routines. It also diminishes the value of the responsibilities that older children have accepted and which contribute to their sense of identity and self-esteem.

Hidden Agendas. The wife/mother or the children may have unexpressed expectations about the stepfather's role in the family. Similarly, the stepfather may have a conception of family life different from what presently exists in the family he enters. Discipline is often a key issue, since in American society the father is assumed to be the parent who most often exercises this responsibility. Yet, before remarriage the mother had this daily responsibility, and the change may be confusing and unacceptable to the children. In addition, there are two fathers, the stepfather and the noncustodial biological father, and their views may conflict. To the extent that these parties' expectations remain unexpressed, they cannot be addressed and are likely to make life in the blended family difficult.

NEGOTIATING THE ROLE OF STEPPARENT

The role of stepparent is a difficult one. A number of suggestions have been offered to ease the transition to this complex social role (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978).

Taking Time. This is important in establishing satisfying relations with stepchildren. Children need time to adjust to the major changes that are occurring in their lives. They should not be pushed too far too fast.

Attempting to Replace the Noncustodial Parent. This typical behavior in the blended family causes problems. Stepparents, especially at the beginning, need to recognize reality—each is an additional parent and not a replacement for the one who is absent from the home.

Expect Confusion in Feelings and Roles. Both children and adults in the blended family are often confused by the new situation. Each is playing a new role with little societal guidance. Each is experiencing difficult and complex emotions related to the new situation. Loyalties are ambivalent and ambiguous.

Fairness and Consistency in Treating All the Children. This is as important in stepfamilies as it is in primary families. So, too, is openness of communication, especially given the ambiguity of this new situation.

Accepting the Need for Outside Help. If it becomes necessary, using professional assistance facilitates the adjustments required in blended families. Most communities have agencies and self-help groups equipped to assist in the adjustment to remarriage and the problems of stepfamilies.

Being a Stepchild

Being a stepchild is also a difficult experience. Stepchildren are exposed to a range of new and complex experiences that require difficult adjustments.

THE REMARRIAGE

Increasingly, studies show that children in reconstituted families have difficulty adjusting to the new family situation in which they find themselves. Though the divorce was difficult for many of the children, most come to terms with it. However, remarriage upsets many of the adjustments made and requires new ones. Some of the consequences of these difficulties show up in the higher proportion of children from blended families who have difficulty establishing and maintaining long-lasting intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex.

THE STEPPARENT

The ambiguity of social norms regulating stepchild/stepparent relationships and the reallocation of family responsibilities are among a number of problems that make being a stepchild difficult.

THE NONCUSTODIAL PARENT

Stepchildren must not only establish new relationships with their stepparent but also with their noncustodial biological parent, most often the father. Despite the fact that most children wish to maintain frequent contact with their noncustodial parent, many fathers do not do so. Noncustodial mothers are more likely to maintain contact with their children. Parents of the noncustodial parent, the children's grandparents, also continue to see their grandchildren at least occasionally.

As time passes fewer noncustodial fathers see their children at all or with any degree of frequency. Though this is usually by choice or circumstance, on occasion it is due to the denial of visitation rights to the noncustodial father for a variety of reasons.

STEPSIBLINGS

About two-thirds of children whose custodial parent has remarried after divorce will have stepsiblings or half-siblings. Relationships with these other children constitute another challenge of reconstituted families. Usually there is an initial wariness about these new siblings. Their likes and dislikes, styles of behavior, and other actions are relatively unknown. Thus, how to relate to them is equally problematical. Also, a child's position in the family may change with the addition of stepsiblings. Children who were the oldest in the family may find themselves demoted in rank by older stepsiblings; the "baby" in the family may be displaced by a younger stepsibling.

Several studies have suggested that after a period of adjustment, most stepsiblings work out a satisfactory adjustment to each other and to the situation. This adjustment is facilitated when the parents do not push it too hard, and by the perceived fairness of parents in dealing with the differences that arise among stepsiblings.

Teenage stepsiblings of the opposite sex may have their relationship complicated by romantic or sexual interest in each other. These relationships are not subject to the incest taboo, and in most states stepsiblings may marry. Though there is very little research on this issue, it is generally believed that romantic or erotic feelings between stepsiblings can complicate an already difficult adjustment situation in reconstituted families.

Relationships with an Ex-Spouse

There are a variety of relationships that exist between ex-marital partners. Cordial and amicable relationships are about as common as angry and conflict-filled ones. Several different patterns have been described by Ahrons and Rodgers (1987).

PERFECT PALS

About half of those who have maintained cordial relations after a divorce continue to be good friends. They have had a relatively conflict-free divorce, like each other, and have fond memories of their earlier relationship. They also feel jointly responsible for their children and see each other as caring and responsible parents, sharing their children's activities. Much of their relationship is structured by them rather than by legal requirements imposed by the courts.

COOPERATIVE COLLEAGUES

The other type of cordial relationship is more like the connection between colleagues in a joint venture. The cooperativeness of these ex-spouses is due to their continued shared interest in the welfare of their children and their desire to be responsible parents. While they are much more likely than "perfect pals" to have their visitation rights arranged through a legal process, they are often able to settle differences between themselves without outside intervention. They are also both likely to participate in their children's events, but without the same degree of warmth between them as is evident from the "perfect pals."

ANGRY ASSOCIATES

Approximately half of the less cordial relationships between former spouses is characterized by anger and bitterness over their earlier marriage and divorce. Their relationship is marked by conflict and power struggles. Often visitation rights are used as a pawn in these battles by custodial mothers, as are support payments by noncustodial fathers. Important events in the lives of their children are less a cause for joint celebration and enjoyment than for delicate negotiation. Some semblance of a relationship is maintained, but it is filled with tension and difficulties.

FIERY FOES

The other half of angry ex-spouse relationships involve former partners who are virtual enemies. The marriage and subsequent divorce have been battlegrounds that have left unhealed wounds. Custody is frequently contested and continues to be a bone of contention between the ex-partners. Support payments are clearly used as weapons in this continuation of marital conflict. These combatants have few if any fond memories of their earlier life. In fact there is a persistent level of destructive bitterness that allows each partner to seize upon any opportunity, including using the children as weapons, to make life miserable for the other. Celebration of the children's important events is simply a setting to continue the struggle for power and inflicting pain on the ex-spouse.

Most divorced men and women remarry, on average within three years. Remarriage rates are influenced by a number of social factors. The divorce rate is higher for remarriages than first marriages, especially when both partners have been married before. Despite the higher divorce rate, remarried couples report greater happiness in their present marriage than their former one. Remarriage parallels the stages through which the process of divorce occurs.

Remarriage partners are less endogamous/homogamous than those in first marriages. This is due to a more limited field of eligibles. Also, the social exchange that marriage entails more closely parallels traditional arrangements than the more equalitarian role bargain of contemporary first marriages.

Reconstituted or blended families are a more intricate and complex social structure than primary families, due to the presence of stepchildren and noncustodial parents. The new roles and ambiguous norms place greater stress on the importance of establishing a high level of commitment and cohesion, along with new patterns of communication and boundary maintenance in blended families. Stepparenting is a difficult role because of the myths surrounding it, its ambiguity, the hostility often harbored by stepchildren, and the financial strain typical in this new family. Stepfathers have particular difficulty because of their "outsider" role. The experience of being a stepchild is also not an easy one. It is complicated by reactions to the remarriage and the need to establish new relationships with a stepparent, the noncustodial biological parent of the same sex, and stepsiblings.

Relationships with ex-spouses can be cordial, and are so in about half of all divorces. Different patterns of relationships exist between ex-marital partners, some constructive, others not; these affect a couple's dealings with their children.

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Epilogue: The Future of Marriage and the Family in the United States

Marriage and family life are often portrayed as central to society. Concern and controversy over these social institutions is not a new phenomenon in the United States, though the issues seem more heated now than in the past. Cadwallader (1975) has termed marriage a "wretched institution" and Cooper (1970) calls for the "death of the family." On the other hand, O'Brien (1981: 13) argues that "marriage may be as close to what living intimately with other people on this small planet is all about: loving, touching, hoping, caring."

In many cases, including those just mentioned, the controversies surrounding marriage and the family reflect the personal experiences of individuals. This book has used census data and social research to go beyond personal experiences and to look for common patterns in how people create, maintain, dissolve, and reestablish family life. In concluding this volume, it seems appropriate to assess the light this information can shed on the likely future of marriage and the family in the United States.

Despite the controversies discussed, it seems clear that these social institutions are not only still strong and viable but are likely to remain so into the foreseeable future. However, they will not simply duplicate the past. They will likely be marked by increasing equality between men and women, and influenced more by individually negotiated and flexible marital scripts than by societally defined marital roles. The possibility of reevaluating and renegotiating marital rights and responsibilities throughout the marriage also appears to loom larger in the marriage of the future.

One of the key factors contributing to these changes in marriage and family life is the changing nature of gender roles. This change has been facilitated by the increasing ability of women to become economically independent of men, thereby equalizing the power relations between them in and out of marriage. This strategy, stressed by modern-day feminists, echoes an almost century-old argument by George Bernard Shaw in his 1908 work *Getting Married: A Disquisitory Play*. But sociologists have long argued that such structural changes need to be accompanied by comparable changes in the cultural value system; and this is also one of the goals of the contemporary feminist movement.

To be effective and long-lasting, these changes would have to be continued over some spread of time, supportive social structures as well as norms and values maintained and new ones created, and the newly established patterns transmitted to future generations through the process of socialization. Many of these changes will continue to disrupt existing patterns and routines, and thus be painful for some individuals and families. However, this is the case for any significant social change; marriage and family are no exceptions. Sensitivity to the problems of transition could be used to reduce the difficulties involved.

Finally, though the form of marriage and the experiences of its members will continue to change, the title of an earlier book (Bane, 1978) best captures the thrust of this epilogue's view of the nature of the American family: *Here to Stay*.

Glossary

ABC-X Model	A model developed by Reuben Hill to analyze the trajectory of family crises through a stressor (A), the resources available to deal with the stress (B), the family's definition of the stressor (C), and the actual crisis (X).
Abortion	The expulsion of an embryo or fetus from the uterus before the normal time for birth.
Abstinence	A sexual standard that defines premarital intercourse as improper for both men and women. The voluntary refraining from sexual intercourse.
Accommodation	The adjustment of a couple to underlying differences in order to function jointly.
Adjustable-Rate Mortgage (ARM)	A mortgage whose interest rate varies with the condition of the financial market; it often has a cap on the amount of increase in any one year and over the lifetime of the mortgage.
Adoption	The process by which individuals or couples become the legal parents of a child not biologically their own.
Afterbirth	The placenta, the amniotic sac, and the remainder of the umbilical cord expelled from a woman's body shortly after birth.
Agape	A form of self-sacrificing love.
AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)	A viral disease that substantially weakens the body's natural immune system against infection.

Alimony (Spousal Support/ Maintenance)	A temporary payment of money to one spouse, usually the wife, by the other to meet economic needs during a period of readjustment after divorce.
Amniocentesis	The insertion of a needle into the uterus to withdraw amniotic fluid in order to determine the sex of the embryo or the presence of genetic abnormalities.
Amniotic Fluid	The salty fluid that forms in a sac around the maturing embryo.
Amniotic Injection	A method of abortion in which either saline solution or prostaglandins is injected into the amniotic fluid to cause contractions that expel the fetus.
Angry Associates	A form of relationship with an ex-spouse characterized by anger and bitterness, and which is marked by conflict and power struggles, especially over the children.
Annulment	A rare form of marital dissolution that declares a marriage never formally existed and was never validly contracted.
Anomie	A lack of purpose or system of values in either a person or society.
Anticipatory Socialization	Engaging in role behavior prior to assuming that particular role.
Anti-Miscegenation	A belief that persons of different races should neither marry nor be sexually involved with each other.
Antinatalist Bias	Bias against the bearing of children.
Artificial Insemination (AI)	The injection of sperm into the uterus of a woman who is fertile, but whose partner is not, at the time of ovulation.
Athletic Coach	An interactive parenting style in which the parent guides the activities of the child by placing stress on the child's ability to learn.
Basal Body Temperature	The usual temperature of the body, variations from which serve as a baseline to estimate when ovulation is occurring in order to practice the rhythm method of birth control.
Battered-Child Syndrome	The physical battering of a child that results in frequent injuries and, occasionally, death.
Bereavement	The period of mourning felt by survivors after the death of someone close.
Betrothal	The formal public commitment of a couple to marry.
Bigamy	Having more than one spouse at a time, a practice that is illegal in the United States.
Bilateral Descent	A non-unilineal descent rule that traces lineage through the male and female relatives of both parents.

Bilocal Residence	The societal rule that requires a newly married couple to live with or near either the bride's family or the groom's family.
Birth Control	Various methods used to prevent birth.
Birth Control Pill	An effective method of contraception that prevents ovulation through the ingestion of a hormone pill by a woman for twenty-one consecutive days each month.
Birth Rate	The actual number of children born per year to 1,000 women of childbearing age, fifteen to forty-four.
Blaming	A pattern of communication that focuses on finding fault.
Blended Family	A family created through remarriage, often involving children from a previous marriage of one or both partners; also called a reconstituted family or a stepfamily.
Blitzkrieg	In marital conflict, a shouting match that erupts without warning and then is quickly over.
Body Language	Expressions and gestures of the body that contribute to the content of a message.
Breech Birth	A difficult and potentially dangerous birth in which the fetus is born feet or buttocks first.
Bride Price	Payment to the family of the bride by the groom or his family.
Bride Service	Service provided by the groom to the bride's family.
Buddy (or Pal)	A "loose" parenting style that blurs the generational difference between parents and children.
Caring	In marriage, a style of loving that involves giving the utmost to a partner in need and being a champion or advocate for the partner's interests.
Case Studies	Research based on information from a few individuals or groups, often over some extended period of time.
Celibacy	A lifestyle that excludes sexual intercourse.
Certificates of Deposit (CDs)	Accounts in which money is placed for a specified period of time and which normally pay more interest than standard savings accounts.
Cervical Cap	A thimble-like piece of rubber or plastic placed directly over the cervix prior to sexual intercourse to prevent conception.
Cervix	The "neck" of the uterus, which extends into the vagina.
Cesarean Section (C-section)	An operation (named after Julius Caesar, who was presumably born in this manner) to remove a fetus through the abdomen when standard childbirth would be too dangerous.
Charismatic Leader	A leader who has extraordinary personal characteristics and appeal and who commands respect and obedience.

Child Abuse	Violence inflicted upon children, usually by their parents or caretakers.
Child Neglect	The failure of parents or caretakers to meet children's basic needs.
Child Support	Payment by the noncustodial parent to the custodial parent for the support of children after divorce.
Clitoris	The sensitive erectile tissue within the vagina.
Cohabitation	Living in an intimate, sexual relationship without being legally married.
Cohort Analysis	The examination of experiences common to a particular age group.
Coitus	Sexual intercourse; the insertion of a man's penis into a woman's vagina.
Coitus Interruptus	In coitus, the withdrawal of the penis from the vagina before ejaculation.
Commune	A self-supporting community of individuals who share a common purpose.
Community Divorce	One of Paul Bohannan's "six stations of divorce" that highlights the effect of a divorce on other interpersonal relationships, such as in-laws and friends.
Community Property	Family resources legally belonging to both marital partners.
Community Remarriage	One of Ann Goetting's "six stations of remarriage" that highlights the need to reestablish community ties with friends and new family.
Commuter Marriage	A marriage in which the two partners have separate careers that require them to live in two different locations and get together only periodically.
Comparable Worth	The process of establishing the basic worth of jobs through an analysis of the experience, skills, knowledge, physical and mental demands, and other factors required of people in different positions.
Complex Marriage	A form of group marriage practiced in the Oneida community.
Compromise	An agreement whereby each marriage partner gives up something in order to continue the relationship.
Computing	A pattern of communication that is excessively rational and emotionally controlled.
Condom	A thin piece of rubber or synthetic material placed over the penis during sexual intercourse to prevent the sperm from reaching the ovum.
Condominium	A residence in which the occupants own their own units, pay a common monthly fee for maintenance and taxes, and share the costs of all common facilities.
Conflict-Habituated Marriage	A marital relationship filled with low-level conflict that is generally kept under control.

Conjugal Courtship	Marriage by consent of the two people involved.
Conjugal Love (Married Love)	A form of affection between marital partners based on tenderness, caring, and sharing of experiences.
Conjugal Power	The exercise of power in marriage.
Consensual and Love-Oriented Extramarital Relationship	Extramarital love relationship that is agreed to by the participant's spouse.
Consensual and Pleasure-Oriented Extramarital Relationship	Extramarital relationship agreed to by the participant's spouse as long as it is centered around pleasure and not love.
Contraception	Various methods and techniques to keep the sperm from fertilizing the ovum.
Control Group	A group of subjects not exposed to the experimental variable, to compare with the experimental group.
Convenience Cohabitation	A form of cohabitation based on traditional gender roles.
Convergent Feedback	Feedback in communication that confirms the original intention.
Cooperative	An apartment building or complex established as a nonprofit corporation in which each occupant owns a proportionate share.
Cooperative Colleagues	A form of friendly relationship in which ex-spouses cooperate in their parental responsibilities.
Coparental Divorce	One of Paul Bohannan's "six stations of divorce" that involves consideration of the effects of divorce on children, including issues of custody.
Corona	The sensitive base of the glans of the penis.
Courtly Love	A form of romantic love practiced in the courts of Europe in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.
Courtship	A form of dating that leads to marriage.
Courtship Cohabitation	An intimate, sexual relationship that does not necessarily lead to marriage.
Cowper's Glands	Two small glands on either side of the urethra that produce a fluid to lubricate the glans of the penis during sexual arousal, easing its entry into the vagina.
Crises	Situations that seriously disrupt people's normal routines so they cannot act in their usual manner.

Cross-Sectional Design	A research design that studies something at one point in time.
Crude Divorce Rate	The number of divorces in any year per 1,000 population.
Cunnilingus	Oral stimulation of a woman's genital area.
Date (Acquaintance) Rape	Physically forcing or threatening to force a date or acquaintance to have sexual intercourse against her will.
Dating	Recreational association of uncommitted couples.
Day Care	Various programs to provide for the children of parents who work or attend school.
Delivery	Childbirth.
Dependent Variable	An action or perception that is presumed to have been caused by the independent variable.
Desertion (Abandonment)	A unilateral separation of marital partners.
Detached Observation	A data-gathering technique in which the observer stays outside of the situation being observed.
Developmental Crises (Normative)	Crises that arise from events that are common to the family life cycle and thus predictable.
Developmental Task	A necessary activity associated with a change in role that makes for successful or unsuccessful role performance.
Devitalized Marriage	A marriage relationship that has lost its initial vitality and zest; though there is little overt conflict, it is clear that the partners have drifted apart.
Diaphragm	A soft dome-like rubber cap with a flexible rim that is placed over the cervix before sexual intercourse to prevent conception.
Dilation and Curettage (D and C)	An abortion method in which the cervix is dilated (enlarged) and the walls of the uterus are scraped.
Dilation and Evacuation (D and E)	An abortion method in which the cervix is enlarged and the amniotic sac and some of the uterine lining are removed by a combination of suction and scraping.
Direct Frontal Assault	In marital conflict, the use of physical violence.
Distracting	A pattern of communication in which a person avoids a direct response by changing the topic or failing to reply at all.
Divergent Feedback	Feedback in communication that is inconsistent with the original intention.

Divided Power	The separate spheres of authority in the family for the husband/father and the wife/mother.
Divorce	The legal process through which a marriage is terminated.
Divorce Mediation	A process of conflict resolution during divorce using the assistance of a trained neutral party.
Double ABCX Model	A complicated and sophisticated model (developed by Hamilton McCubbin and Joan Patterson) to analyze the trajectory of family crises.
Double Dating	A form of dating which involves two or more couples; for younger people it is a transitional form between group dating and individual dating.
Double Descent	A non-unilineal descent rule that traces lineage through the males on the father's side and the females on the mother's side.
Double Standard	A sexual standard that defines premarital intercourse as acceptable for men but not for women; also called the orthodox double standard.
Douching	A relatively ineffective method of contraception that involves washing out the vagina with water or a special solution immediately after sexual intercourse.
Dowry	Payment by the bride's family to the groom or his family for their consent to the marriage.
Dysfunctions	Actions that detract from the stability of a system.
Economic Affairs	A developmental task of marriage that focuses on the need to reach agreement about the priorities and manner of spending family income.
Economic Divorce	One of Paul Bohannan's "six stations of divorce" that involves the distribution of the couple's resources after divorce.
Economic Remarriage	One of Ann Goetting's "six stations of remarriage" that reassesses the family's economic needs and practices.
Ectopic Pregnancy	The implantation of a zygote outside of the uterus, a difficult and dangerous situation.
Elder/ Parent Abuse	Violence inflicted on an aged person, usually by one's child or caretaker.
Elopement	Running away to marry, usually without the presence of family or friends.
Emancipation Cohabitation	A form of cohabitation that is used to achieve independence from parents.
Embryo	The human organism during the first eight weeks after conception.
Embryo Transfer	An experimental method of surrogate motherhood in which a volunteer woman is inseminated with the sperm of the partner of a woman who has difficulty producing usable ova. After fertilization, the ovum is removed from the surrogate mother and placed in the original woman's uterus.

Embryonic Stage	About the third to eighth week after fertilization.
Emotional Divorce	One of Paul Bohannan's "six stations of divorce" that refers to the psychological withdrawal of the partners from the marital relationship even before the actual breakup of the marriage.
Emotional Remarriage	One of Ann Goetting's "six stations of remarriage" that emphasizes the need to reestablish an emotional commitment to an intimate relationship that was destroyed by the previous divorce.
Empathy	The ability to view a situation from the viewpoint of another.
Empty Nest	A stage in the family life cycle when the children have grown up and left the parental home.
Endogamy	A partner selection regulation that defines a class of individuals within which a person can choose a marriage partner; also used to refer to a marriage between two people of similar social backgrounds.
Endometrium	The soft tissue that lines the uterus.
Engagement	An intimate relationship that includes a public commitment to marry.
Envy	The desire to have something belonging to another.
Epididymis	The part of the testes in which sperm is stored while maturing.
Episiotomy	A surgical incision to enlarge the vaginal opening to prevent painful tearing during childbirth.
Equalitarian Power	The societal rule investing family authority equally with the husband/father and the wife/mother.
Erogenous Zone	An area of the body that is sensitive to touch and is sexually arousing.
Eros	A form of love involving intense emotional and sexual feelings.
Estate Planning	Planning for the needs of survivors, including an analysis of the tax implications of such plans.
Estrogen	The female sex hormone.
Estrus Cycle	The limited period of sexual arousal operative in most animal species, not including humans.
Exchange Theory	A theory of human behavior which argues that the creation or maintenance of relationships depends on the balance of costs and benefits involved.
Excommunication	The denial of the sacraments to Roman Catholics who violate important religious precepts.
Exogamy	A partner selection regulation that defines a class of individuals within which a person is not to select a marriage partner.
Experimental Group	A group of subjects exposed to some experimental variable.

Experimental Method	A technique of research which involves the use of both an experimental group and a control group.
Expressive Leader	A leader who focuses attention on the internal needs and relationships of group members.
Expressive Sexuality	A contemporary sexual script in which sexuality is seen as basic to both men and women.
Extended Family	Two or more nuclear families bound together by a parent-child and sibling tie.
Extra-Family Relationships	A developmental task of marriage that involves balancing the claims of jobs, friends, and extended family members with those of the nuclear family for the time, energy, and resources of the marital couple.
Extramarital Sex	Sexual relations of married people with a partner other than their spouse.
Fallopian Tubes	A four-inch long tube connected to each ovary through which the ovum travels until it is either fertilized by the male's sperm during intercourse or moves into the uterus for discarding as the monthly period.
Family	A relatively permanent social group of individuals connected by ancestry, marriage, or adoption.
Family Life Cycle	A set of stages in which the tasks and activities of marriage and parenthood differ.
Fellatio	Oral stimulation of a man's genitals.
Feminism	A social movement organized to secure political, economic, and social rights for women equal to those of men.
Feminization of Poverty	The sharp reduction in the standard of living of women in single-parent households after divorce.
Fertility	The total number of babies born to women during their reproductive years.
Fertilization	The penetration of an ovum by sperm.
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	A condition caused by excessive alcohol consumption by a woman during pregnancy that results in an infant who is smaller than usual and has both mental deficiencies and severe physical abnormalities.
Fetal Stage	The period from about the eighth week after fertilization until birth.
Fetus	The unborn organism from eight weeks after conception until birth.
Field of Eligibles	The socially approved pool of people who are potential marital or sexual partners.
Fiery Foes	A relationship of ex-spouses in which they are virtual enemies, and any joint situation is seen as a battleground to continue their war against each other.

Fixed-Rate Mortgage	A mortgage whose interest rate stays constant throughout the term of the mortgage, usually fifteen or thirty years.
Flextime	A system in which, within specified limits, workers are able to schedule their work hours to meet other needs.
Foreplay	Activities such as petting that lead to sexual intercourse.
Foreskin Prepuce	The skin covering the glans of the penis, which is partially or completely removed during circumcision.
Fraternal Polyandry	A form of polyandry in which the second or subsequent husbands of a woman are limited to the brothers or close male relatives of the first husband.
Functions	Contributions to the stability of a system.
Funnel Process	An explanation for the deepening of commitment of intimate partners to each other.
Gay	Having a preference for a sexual partner of the same sex; generally used to refer to male homosexuals, while lesbian is used to refer to female homosexuals.
Gender	Cultural and social characteristics assigned by society to females and males.
Gender Roles	The pattern of behavior, rights, and obligations that are viewed as appropriate by society for each sex.
General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)	Hans Selye's theory that the body adapts to stress in three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion.
Germinal Period	The first few weeks of pregnancy, comprising fertilization and implantation.
Glans	The most sensitive part of the penis, at its tip.
Grief	The emotion felt upon the loss of something of value that is not expected to be replaced.
Group Dating	A form of dating for young people in which a number of boys and girls engage in a common activity without explicit pairing off.
Group Marriage	A form of polygamy in which two or more men are collectively married to two or more women.
Group Marriage Communes	Communes designed to create new styles of family living in contrast to the traditional nuclear family.
Guerrilla Warfare	In marital conflict, the inflicting of a series of small wounds through constant quarreling, belittling, and nagging.
Headstart	A federally funded program that provides education and a range of health and social services for preschool children in low-income families.

Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)	A group health care arrangement in which there is a prepaid fee for all medical services.
Hedonistic Calculus	A motivation to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.
Hermaphrodite	A person who has the genital and sexual characteristics of both sexes.
Heterogamy	Marriage between two people with different personal characteristics.
Heterosexuality	The condition of having a preference for a sexual partner of the opposite sex.
Hippie Communes	Communes centered around the drug culture.
Holocaust	The murder of approximately 6 million Jews and several million others by the Nazis before and during World War II.
Home Equity Loan	A loan of up to 70 to 80 percent of the equity of one's home.
Homoeroto-phobia	Another term for homophobia.
Homogamy	Marriage between two people of similar personal characteristics.
Homophobia	A strong, irrational fear and hatred of homosexuality and homosexuals.
Homosexuality	The condition of having a preference for a sexual partner of the same sex.
Honeymoon	A vacation that a newly married couple takes just after the wedding; the period of unusually good rapport that occurs at the beginning of marriage.
Househusband	A husband who stays home to care for it and the children.
Hymen	The tissue that partially covers the opening of the vagina and that is generally ruptured during first intercourse, masturbation, or by the use of a tampon.
Hypergamy	A form of the marriage gradient in which the woman marries "up" to a man of a more desirable social status.
Hypogamy	A form of the marriage gradient in which the woman marries "down" to a man of a less desirable social status.
Hypothesis	A statement that explicitly links two or more variables that can then be subject to empirical testing.
Hysterotomy	A major surgical procedure for late abortions that is similar to a Cesarean birth.
Ideological Communes	Communes organized around some set of non-religious ideological principles.

Ideological Congruence	A developmental task of marriage that highlights the importance of the couple's sharing a similar, though not necessarily identical philosophy of life.
Ideology	An interrelated set of beliefs held by an individual or a class.
Implantation	The embedding of the zygote into the thickened endometrium of the uterus.
Impotence	A man's inability to have or maintain an erection to effect sexual intercourse.
Incest Taboo	An exogamous rule that forbids marital or sexual relationships between close family members.
Independent Variable	A factor that is presumed to be the cause of some action or perception.
Individual Dating	A recreational association of an uncommitted heterosexual couple.
Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)	Private pension plans for employed workers.
Induced Abortion	The deliberate expelling of an embryo or fetus from the uterus before it is developed enough to survive.
Infanticide	The practice of putting infants to death, or allowing them to die.
Infatuation	A strong positive feeling toward another that tends to be based on a relatively unrealistic estimate of the characteristics of the other person or of the possibility of establishing an intimate relationship.
Inflation	A rapid and continual rise in prices due to a greater availability of money and credit than goods or services to purchase.
Informal Separation	An informal agreement by a married couple to live apart.
Installment Financing	The purchasing of an item for little or no initial money, with the cost, including interest, being spread over some specified period of time.
Institutional Sexism	Practices that discriminate against women which are built into the system.
Instrumental Leader	A leader who focuses attention on the group's tasks and responsibilities.
Interaction Tactics	A developmental task of marriage that refers to the way in which the couple learns to cooperate with each other, to compromise, and to accommodate to differences in order to maintain a quality relationship.
Interactional Marriage Pattern	A pattern in which the lives of marital partners are intertwined, and companionship and joint activities are central to the relationship.
Interview	A series of general questions that permits free-ranging answers by the respondent.

Intestate	Referring to a person who dies without a will; as a consequence, the distribution of the deceased's assets are decided by the court.
Intimacy	The state of being in intense intellectual, physical, and/or emotional communion with another human being.
Intrauterine Device	A small plastic device that is inserted into the uterus, can remain in place for several years, and can prevent the implantation of the fertilized ovum, thus acting as a birth control device.
Intrinsic Marriage	A marriage contracted for love and emotional attachment.
Investments	The use of money to make money that is more risky than savings accounts, CDs, or money market accounts.
In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)	A method by which a woman's ova are removed from her body and fertilized in a dish with the sperm of her partner and then replaced in her uterus after it has been prepared properly.
Involuntary Infertility	The inability to conceive a child after a year of unprotected sexual intercourse or to carry a pregnancy long enough to permit a live birth.
Involuntary Stable Singles	Individuals who wish to marry but who have come to the realization that they are unlikely to do so.
Involuntary Temporary Singles	Individuals who are actively seeking a marital partner.
Jealousy	The emotion felt upon the loss of something of value, which is then possessed by another.
Job Sharing	The reorganization of a full-time work position to provide part-time employment for two people.
Joint Custody	An arrangement after divorce in which both parents are legally mandated to be involved in the decisions and responsibilities that affect their children. The children often live with each parent for some alternating though specified period of time.
Keogh Plans	Private pension plans for the self-employed that have substantial tax benefits.
Kibbutz	A communal arrangement in Israel in which all the members are equal and share both in the responsibilities and benefits of the cooperative.
Kinship	A structured system of relationships in which individuals are bound to one another by complex interlocking and ramifying ties.
Labia Majora	The main or greater lips that consist of two folds of skin at the exterior end of the vagina.
Labia Minora	The minor or lesser lips that are within the labia majora.

Labor	The muscular contractions of giving birth.
Lamaze Method	A specific method of natural childbirth that stresses the preparation of both partners for their roles in the birth process.
Laparoscopy	Abdominal exploration employing a type of endoscope called a laparoscope; also an operation to remove ova or sterilize a female involving a laparoscope.
Latchkey Children	Children who are left unsupervised for at least part of the day while their parents work or attend school.
Leader-Directed Communal Family	Communes organized around a charismatic leader.
Leboyer Method	A specific method of natural childbirth that stresses a gentle birth by controlling the levels of noise and light during the actual delivery.
Legal Divorce	One of Paul Bohannan's "six stations of divorce" that focuses on the legal steps taken to end marriage.
Legal Remarriage	One of Ann Goetting's "six stations of remarriage" that focuses on the legal changes required after remarriage.
Legal Separation	A formal, legally binding agreement by a married couple to live apart, presumably while contemplating divorce.
Lesbian	A woman who prefers other women as sexual partners.
Levirate	The rule requiring the brother or a close male relative to assume the family obligations of a man who dies.
Linus Blanket Cohabitation	A form of cohabitation that results from feelings of insecurity.
Longitudinal Design	A research design that studies something at a number of different points in time.
Long-Term Premarital Cohabitation	A relatively long intimate sexual relationship of the unmarried that is a form of trial marriage.
Love	A strong sentiment of attachment and positive feeling toward an object.
Lovers' Nest	A type of honeymoon in which the newlyweds are completely wrapped up in each other; love and sex are at the forefront of this period.
Lovers' Quarrels	Arguments that lead couples to reassess the nature of their relationship.
Ludus	A loose and playful style of love.
Lust	A self-centered attachment to another focused sexual gratification.
Mania	An intense and almost obsessive form of love.

Marital Adjustment	The degree to which marital partners adjust to each other and to the context of marriage and family life.
Marital Happiness	The degree to which a marriage is meeting an individual's needs at a particular point in time.
Marital Intimacy	A developmental task of marriage that focuses on the need of marital partners to learn how to express their love and affection for each other in ways the other appreciates.
Marital Power	A developmental task of marriage that requires partners to respect each other and to accept their legitimate role in family decision making.
Marital Rape	The use of force or threat of force by a husband to engage in sexual intercourse with an unwilling wife.
Marital Role	A set of attitudes and behaviors that marital partners are expected to demonstrate in marriage.
Marital Satisfaction	An individual's reflective view of the adequacy of the marriage over some period of time.
Marital Scripts	Individual beliefs and expectations about how marital couples should behave toward each other and how they should treat their common responsibilities.
Marital Success	Evaluation of a marriage in terms of its meeting societal expectations, such as having at least one working parent, children, a reasonable and steady income, and acceptable standard of living.
Marriage	A set of laws and practices that serves to connect men and women in relationships that establish families.
Marriage Companionship	A developmental task of marriage that involves learning to enjoy each other's company and sharing experiences.
Marriage Gradient	Marriage between two people who are unequal in some important status characteristic.
Marriage Sociability	A development task of marriage that requires adjustment to the range of social activities common to marital couples.
Marriage Solidarity	The overall strength of the bonds within the family.
Marriage Squeeze	A mismatch in the number of eligible men and women as marital partners due to differential cohort birth rates.
Martyr	A parenting style that involves complete, excessive devotion to the needs of the child.
Masturbation	Self-manipulation of the genitals.
Maternity Leave	Unpaid leave granted women to give birth and to provide initial care to the newborn or newly adopted child.
Matriarchy	The societal rule investing authority in the family to the wife/mother.

Matrilineal Descent	A unilineal descent rule that traces lineage through the female.
Matrilocal Residence	The societal rule that requires a newly married couple to live with or near the bride's family.
Message	The intended content of a communication.
Metamessage	The intentional use of paralanguage to add particular emphasis to the words used in speech.
Midwife	A person trained in the art of assisting women who are giving birth.
Miscarriage	A natural or spontaneous abortion.
Mommy Track	The establishing of part-time positions that are important but less demanding for women who want to combine a career with raising a family.
Money Market Accounts	A type of savings account that offers interest rates between those of simple savings accounts and certificates of deposit.
Monogamy	The marriage of one man to one woman at a time.
Mons Veneris	An area of fatty tissue covered by short curly hair above a woman's pubic bone.
Morning-After Pill (RU-486)	An oral birth control pill designed to be taken after the woman has missed her first period.
Natural Childbirth	Childbirth without the use of drugs or medical instruments.
Neolocal Residence	The societal rule that permits a newly married couple to establish a new residence independent of either parent.
No-Fault Divorce	A divorce process that does not require finding that one of the partners was at fault.
Noise	Factors that distort or make it difficult to receive a message.
Nonconsensual and Love-Oriented Extramarital Relationship	An extramarital love relationship that is not likely to be agreed to by the participant's spouse and often requires secrecy and deception.
Non-consensual and Pleasure-Centered Extramarital Relationship	An extramarital relationship that is focused around pleasure but is not agreed to by the participant's spouse.
Nonunilineal Descent	A rule of descent that traces lineage through both parents.
Nonverbal Communication	Communication through means other than speech; body language.

Nuclear Family	A family consisting of a married man and woman with their biological or adopted children.
Nuclear Family of Orientation	The nuclear family into which a person is born and holds the status of child.
Nuclear Family of Procreation	The nuclear family which a person creates through marriage and in which he or she holds the status of adult.
Ovaries	Two almond-shaped glands in which the ova are produced.
Ovulation	The process stimulated by the hormones estrogen and progesterone to produce an ovum.
Ovum	The egg produced by the ovaries which, when fertilized by the man's sperm, develops into a fetus.
Paralanguage	The nonsemantic components of speech, such as speed, pitch, volume, and stress.
Parallel Relationship	A marriage in which the roles and interests of marital partners are somewhat separate and discrete.
Parental Leave	Unpaid leave granted to either parent to be absent from work to care for a newborn, newly adopted, or ill child.
Parental Remarriage	One of Ann Goetting's "six stations of remarriage" that stresses the need to reformulate parental roles and responsibilities.
Participant Observation	A data-gathering technique in which the observer is also an active participant in the situation being observed.
Passive-Congenial Marriage	A marriage relationship in which the emotional closeness and the intensity of the affectional bond between partners have been deemphasized. The marriage is comfortable, but satisfactions are generally found in activities outside the relationship.
Patriarchal Sexuality	A traditional sexual script in which men are sexually dominant and women are sexually passive.
Patriarchy	The societal rule investing authority in the family to the husband/father.
Patrilineal Descent	A unilineal descent rule that traces lineage only through the male.
Patrilocal Residence	The societal rule that requires a newly married couple to live with or near the groom's family.
Penis	The elongated structure of soft, sensitive erectile tissue that fills with blood and becomes enlarged when the man is sexually aroused.
Perfect Pals	A form of relationship with an ex-spouse that is warm and amicable, and involves feelings of joint responsibility for the children.

Permissiveness-with-Affection	A sexual standard that defines premarital intercourse as acceptable for both men and women as long as it is in the context of an intimate and reasonably stable relationship.
Permissiveness-without-Affection	A sexual standard that defines premarital intercourse as an acceptable form of recreation; no committed relationship is necessary.
Perpetuum Mobile	A hectic, fast-paced honeymoon trip.
Petting	Physical contact short of intercourse that leads to sexual arousal.
Placating	A pattern of communication that involves trying to please the partner whether or not the placater agrees with the partner's attitudes or behavior.
Placenta	The tissue and membranes that form to provide an avenue of nourishment from mother to embryo.
Pluralistic Ignorance	The lack of knowledge of the depth of commitment of a partner to a relationship.
Police Officer (Drill Sergeant)	A strict parenting style in which the parent is defined as the authority figure and lays down clear rules that the child is expected to obey.
Polyandry	A form of polygamy in which one woman is married to two or more men at the same time.
Polygamous Family	Two or more nuclear families linked by the marital bond.
Polygamy	Having two or more spouses at the same time.
Polygyny	A form of polygamy in which one man is married to two or more women at the same time.
Postpartum Depression	A common response to childbirth in which the new mother is irritable, cries frequently, feels anxious, and has difficulty sleeping.
Power	The ability to accomplish one's aims despite the resistance of others.
Pragma	A style of love that is sensible and realistic.
Prenatal	Referring to the period before birth.
Prenuptial Contract	A written agreement between partners before marriage specifying the distribution of assets if the marriage ends in divorce, and in some cases detailing the marital and parental obligations of the two partners.
Primary Relationship	A long-lasting relationship that spans a wide range of the participants' identities and activities.
Primary Sex Characteristics	The genitals necessary to the human reproductive process.
Primary Stress	An event or experience that leads to a stress response.

Principle of Least Interest	A relationship in which one partner is less committed to the relationship than the other and thus dominates it.
Pronatalist Bias	A bias favoring the bearing of children.
Prostate Gland	Together with the seminal vesicles, this produces the semen.
Psychic Divorce	One of Paul Bohannan's "six stations of divorce" that centers around the need of partners to shift from interdependence to autonomy after divorce.
Psychic Remarriage	One of Ann Goetting's "six stations of remarriage" that focuses on the creation of a new shared identity.
Psychological Warfare	In marriage, a form of conflict in which one person seeks to disorient the partner and weaken his or her resolve to end the conflict.
Pulls	Attractive features of an alternative to a person's present circumstances.
Pushes	Negative features of a person's present circumstances.
Questionnaire	A series of fixed questions or statements to which a person is asked to respond.
Quickening	The fetal movements felt by the mother, usually in the fifth month after fertilization.
Rape	The use of force or threat of force by a man to engage in sexual intercourse with an unwilling woman.
Recession	A considerable slowdown in economic activity and a sharp rise in unemployment.
Reconstituted Family	A family created through remarriage, which often involves children from a previous marriage of one or both partners; also called a blended family or a stepfamily.
Refined Divorce Rate	The number of divorces in any year per 1,000 married women over the age of fifteen.
Refractory Period	A variable period of time after sexual intercourse during which orgasm is not possible.
Religious Communes	Communes based on religious principles of family.
Remarriage	The marriage of a person who has previously been divorced or widowed.
Research Design	A strategy for collecting and interpreting relevant data for testing a hypothesis.
Residential Propinquity	Living near each other; a factor in the explanation of a choice of marital partner.
Resource Theory	The theory that conjugal power depends on the social resources of the marital partners.

Resources in Cultural Context	The theory that the bases of conjugal power are the resources that the culture defines as desirable.
Rhythm Method	The only method of birth control other than abstinence that is approved by the Roman Catholic church. It involves abstaining from sexual intercourse during the period surrounding ovulation.
Roe *v.* Wade	The 1973 United States Supreme Court decision that provided constitutional protection for a woman's right to have an abortion.
Romantic Love	A strong sexual attraction between two people.
Romeo & Juliet Effect	The phenomenon in which parental opposition increases a couple's affection for each other.
Rules of Descent	Societal rules for establishing lineage and kinship.
Sample	A relatively small number of people who are representative of a larger population from which they are drawn.
Sandwich Generation	Mature adults caught between the needs of their parents and those of their growing children.
Savings	Money regularly deposited into a savings account, credit union, or similar financial institution that is earning a fixed rate of interest.
Science	The systematic attempt to obtain reliable knowledge by the use of empirical observation.
Scientific Method	A series of steps that is typically used to improve objectivity and reliability in the gathering and interpretation of empirical data.
Scrotum	The loose sac that hangs behind the penis and contains the testes.
Second Shift	The term used by Arlie Hochschild to highlight the fact that many working women are expected to continue their family responsibilities after they come home from working full-time outside of the home.
Secondary Analysis	Research that analyzes existing data rather than collecting new information.
Secondary Relationship	A relationship of relatively short duration that is formal and impersonal.
Secondary Sex Characteristics	The often observable physical differences between men and women.
Secondary Stress	The additional stress caused by the response to primary stress.
Semen	The milky fluid produced by the prostate gland and the seminal vesicles into which the sperm is deposited on its passage through the urethra and out of the penis.
Seminal Vesicles	Together with the prostate gland, these produce the semen.
Seminiferous Tubules	The part of the testes in which sperm is manufactured.

Service Communes	Communes created to establish a total environment encompassing family, work, and recreation within the group.
Sex	A set of biological characteristics that distinguishes men from women.
Sex Ratio	The ratio of men to women in a society.
Sexual Orientation	A person's preference for a sexual partner of the same or opposite sex.
Sexual Response Cycle	The pattern of human sexual stimulation from arousal, to plateau, to climax, and finally to resolution.
Sexual Scripts	Cultural definitions of appropriate sexual attitudes and behavior.
Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD)	Any disease contracted and transmitted through sexual contact; formerly called venereal disease, or VD.
Siege	In marital conflict, the withholding of responses such as warmth and affection that are routinely expected between marital partners.
Situational Crises (Nonnormative)	Crises that are not predictable and arise suddenly and abruptly.
Sixty-Nine	Mutual oral-genital stimulation.
Social Group	Two or more individuals who have a shared sense of identity and who interact with each one another in structured ways on the basis of a common set of expectations about one another's behavior.
Social Institution	A stable arrangement to deal with an important societal concern.
Social Mobility	The changing of one's social class position.
Social Security	A fund that people contribute to during their working life, as do their employers; it is in part a retirement fund and in part a life insurance plan.
Social Structure	A network of social relationships.
Socialization	The lifelong process through which a person becomes a functioning and contributing member of a particular society.
Sole Custody	The awarding of custody of children solely to one parent after divorce.
Sororal Polygyny	A form of polygyny in which the second or subsequent wives are limited to the sisters or close female relatives of the first wife.
Sororate	A practice in which a deceased wife is replaced as a marital partner by her sister or close female relative.
Sperm	The carrier of the man's genetic inheritance that is manufactured in the testes and is capable of fertilizing the woman's ovum in the process of sexual intercourse.

Spermicides	Chemicals inserted into the vagina as foams, creams, jellies, sprays, or suppositories shortly before sexual intercourse to destroy sperm.
Split Custody	Custody arrangement in families with more than one child in which each parent is given sole custody of one or more of the children following divorce.
Sponge	A pillow-shaped device made of polyurethane and saturated with a chemical spermicide; it is placed into the vagina before sexual intercourse to prevent conception.
Spouse Abuse	The violence of one marital partner toward the other.
Stand-Off Attack	In marital conflict, the use of flirtations and infidelities as a form of conflict.
Stepfamily	A family created through remarriage, often involving children from the previous marriage of one or both partners; also called a reconstituted family or a stepfamily.
Stereotypes	Relatively inflexible views of classes of people that resist change despite contrary evidence.
Sterilization	A surgical method to keep a person from reproducing.
Stimulus-Value-Role Theory	A theory of partner selection as a dynamic process of successive filters of "stimulus value," "value sharing," and compatible views of expected partner "roles."
Storge	A relaxed and less intense form of love.
Stress	A state of tension that challenges a person's ability to adapt to some physical, psychological, or social event or experience.
Stressors	Events or activities that are likely to produce stress.
Subdermal Inplant (Norplant)	A rod-like capsule containing progestin that is implanted under a woman's skin by a physician and offers about five years of contraceptive protection.
Surrogate Motherhood	A process by which a woman is artificially inseminated with the sperm of the partner of a woman who is either infertile or risks transmitting a genetic defect to her biological offspring; the surrogate then carries the fetus to term.
Teacher (Counselor)	A parenting style that is centered around the needs of the child but is not as extreme as the martyr style. It attempts to tap into the innate potential of the child.
Tender-Years Doctrine	A legal doctrine that holds that children are better off with their mother than their father; this doctrine guided custody decisions after divorce for much of the twentieth century.
Term Insurance	A policy that provides protection to survivors should the insured person die during a specified period of time.

Testes	Two bean-shaped organs within the scrotum that manufacture both sperm and testosterone.
Testing Cohabitation	A short-term form of cohabitation, used essentially as a trial marriage.
Testosterone	The male sex hormone.
Theory	An explanation for relationships among variables.
Theory of Complementary Needs	A theory that argues that people choose marital partners who have personality traits they lack or that they need to complete themselves.
Total Marriage	A marriage relationship that is similar to a vital marriage but with more extensive points of contact of common interests and activities connecting the couple.
Transitional Double Standard	A sexual standard that defines premarital intercourse as acceptable for men and only acceptable for women who are involved in a committed relationship.
Tremendous Trifles	The little annoyances in marriage that take on exaggerated importance.
Tubal Ligation	A procedure to sterilize women by cauterizing the fallopian tubes to prevent the ovum from descending from the ovaries to be fertilized.
Tubal Pregnancy	An ectopic pregnancy in which the zygote has become implanted in one of the fallopian tubes.
Type A Personality	A person who is highly competitive, ambitious, and impatient, and as a consequence is prone to stress-related illnesses.
Type B Personality	A person who is relaxed, less aggressive, and less competitive and consequently is less prone to stress-related illnesses.
Unilineal Descent	A rule of descent that traces lineage through one parent.
Urethra	A tube within the penis that carries both urine and seminal fluid.
Uterus	A hollow muscular tube at the interior end of the vagina that receives the fertilized egg and in which the fetus grows until birth; also called the womb.
Utilitarian Marriage	A marriage contracted for pragmatic reasons.
Vacation	A type of honeymoon used to recover from the frantic and anxiety-provoking time leading up to and ending with the wedding.
Vacuum Curettage (Vacuum Aspiration)	An abortion method in which a tube inserted into the uterus gently draws out the amniotic sac and the uterine lining during the early stages of a pregnancy.

Vagina	A muscular tube that extends from the uterus to the vulva.
Variable	A trait or characteristic that changes or has different values under different conditions.
Varicocele	A damaged or enlarged vein that results in a low sperm count or low sperm motility, and hence infertility.
Vas Deferens	The tube from the testes to the urethra through which the semen flows for ejaculation during intercourse.
Vasectomy	A procedure to sterilize a man by cauterizing the vas deferens to prevent transmission of semen during intercourse.
Venereal Disease (VD)	An earlier term for sexually transmitted disease (STD).
Vital Marriage	A marriage relationship based on intense sharing and desire for togetherness.
Voluntary Stable Singles	Those individuals who choose singlehood as a permanent lifestyle.
Voluntary Temporary Singles	Those individuals who choose to remain single for some limited period of time.
Vulva	The exterior portion of the vagina, made up of the labia majora and labia minora.
Will	A legal document specifying how a person's assets are to be distributed upon death, and naming an executor to carry out its terms.
Withdrawal	A form of contraception in which the man withdraws his penis from the vagina before ejaculation; also called coitus interruptus.
Womb	Another name for uterus.
Youth Communes	Communes explicitly composed of young college graduates or dropouts who want to share the advantages of group living.
Zygote	A fertilized ovum.

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